Group Mentoring

A Study of Mentoring Groups in Three Programs

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P/PV
MENTOR
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

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Prepared for The National Mentoring Partnership's Public Policy Council

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Executive Summary

Among the many kinds of youth programs that exist today, one approach—mentoring—has achieved extensive public recognition. The high profile of mentoring can be attributed to its remarkable success: research on the effects of traditional community-based, one-on-one mentoring has shown that mentored youth make measurable gains in school achievement and attendance and in relations with peers and parents (LoSciuto et al., 1996; Tierney and Grossman, 1995; McPartland and Nettles, 1991).

Despite these encouraging findings, programs based on the traditional model have not been able to reach all the youth who are in need of the benefits mentoring can provide. Volunteers are scarce. And because traditional programs rely heavily on parent referrals (Furano et al., 1993), youth whose parents are unaware of these programs or do not fully understand what they have to offer may never even be referred.

In efforts to serve more youth, agencies have developed several innovative approaches to mentoring. Group mentoring is one approach that has gained considerable popularity. The approach is based on the idea that volunteers who interact regularly with small groups of youth can fulfill the role of a mentor—to be a trusted counselor or guide—by developing a number of successful and productive relationships simultaneously. In this way, these programs can provide mentors to large numbers of youth without depleting scarce volunteer resources.

In addition to serving a larger number of youth, group mentoring may also be reaching volunteers and youth whom traditional programs have been less successful in reaching. Because most group mentoring programs are based at particular locations, such as schools and other youth-serving organizations (Sipe and Roder, 1999), they have access to teachers, youth workers and other adults known to the institution and willing to serve as mentors in a familiar, structured environment. At the same time, because adults in these institutions inform young people about the programs, the pool of youth who can be recruited is larger than when parents are the only conduit to the program.

This approach may also reach individuals who prefer group-based relationships. Many youth want opportunities to interact with their peers—opportunities that are critical to their development (e.g., Sullivan, 1953); and some may be uncomfortable meeting one on one with an adult. Group mentoring may offer these youth a familiar, comfortable setting in which they can interact with peers, while at the same time receiving guidance and support from an adult.

But some practitioners remain skeptical of the value of this approach. Some even question whether the approach should be considered mentoring. The mentor-youth relationship is the foundation of one-on-one mentoring. In group matches, mentors cannot provide as much individual attention to youth as they can in traditional one-on-one settings, possibly preventing or limiting the development of strong adult-youth relationships. Because the quality of the mentor-youth relationship helps determine the extent to which youth benefit from mentoring (Grossman and Johnson, 1999), these groups may also be less likely than traditional matches to promote positive changes in youth.

Others have concerns about the group structure itself and its potential to expose youth to negative experiences. Differential treatment, exclusion of youth from group interactions, and negative interactions among youth can all occur in groups. Exposure to such experiences could negate whatever benefits group mentoring is intended to provide.

These potential strengths and concerns are significant. Yet little research has been conducted to support or challenge these views. As group mentoring becomes more widespread, fundamental questions need to be answered: What is group mentoring? Who gets involved in these programs? What challenges does the group structure pose to mentors? What kind of adult-youth relationships develop in the group setting? What factors help them develop? And can these groups produce the kind of concrete outcomes for youth that have resulted from one-on-one programs?

Answering these questions will help us understand the extent to which group mentoring provides youth with important components of mentoring. It will also improve our understanding of other adult-youth interactions that take place outside of the family. Most interactions between nonparental adults and youth occur in groups—in the classroom, on sports teams, and in after-school and faith-based activities. Yet few studies have examined the extent to which significant relationships develop in these groups or the potential benefits of participation. Describing youth's experiences in mentoring groups can thus inform practitioners and policy makers involved or interested in many other types of youth programming and activities.

Study Sample and Methodology

To begin to address the questions outlined, Public/Private Ventures, in collaboration with The National Mentoring Partnership, has made a preliminary examination of three innovative group mentoring programs and has drawn on the findings from data collected in two earlier P/PV studies of mentoring programs and of mentors involved in these programs.

The three programs involved in the current study represent distinct approaches to group mentoring and were chosen because of their promising work.[1] YouthFriends in Kansas City is an organization that provides technical assistance to school districts setting up school-based mentoring programs (serving youth in both a group and one-on-one format), the Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS Program organizes teams of mentors to meet with groups of middle-school students, and the Group Mentoring Program of the Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters Program of Erie County (Be-A-Friend GMP) assigns paid staff as mentors to small groups of youth. Our visits to these programs included interviews with program and school staff, in-depth interviews with 52 youth and 19 mentors, and focus groups with 12 additional mentors.

As noted, we also drew on data collected in two earlier P/PV studies. The first involved interviews with 291 mentors working with youth in groups and 802 mentors matched with youth one on one (Herrera et al., 2000). We use these data to describe characteristics of mentoring groups and their participants. The second study reports on interviews with program staff from 722 mentoring programs nationwide (Sipe and Roder, 1999). We use this information primarily as support for findings from the mentor survey.

Overview of Findings Presented in This Report

What is Group Mentoring?

Groups range in size from two to 32 youth, but average about 10. More than half of group mentors work with at least one other mentor on a team. Groups meet in various settings, most commonly in schools; their average meeting time is 21 hours a month; the activities they engage in are both structured and unstructured; and their focus varies. In the current study, group activities included social activities and sports; community service, health and educational workshops; activities focused on team building, leadership development and cultural diversity; homework help; and discussion of specific subjects such as science or music.

Previous research suggests that the annual cost per youth in group mentoring programs (about $408) is lower than that in one-on-one programs (about $1,030; Fountain and Arbreton, 1999). Data from the three programs involved in this study support these findings: YouthFriends estimates the cost of each group and one-on-one volunteer at about $334; TEAMWORKS estimates the cost of serving one youth at $550; and Be-A-Friend GMP estimates the cost per youth at about $720 (see Appendix B for more details on the cost of these programs).

Who Participates in Group Mentoring?

Group programs appear to attract less educated, older and lower-income volunteers; more women and African Americans; and more retirees than do one-on-one mentoring programs. Group mentors in

[1] The report and this executive summary refer to the three-program study as the "current study" to distinguish it from the two earlier surveys that also form the basis of our analysis.

the current study said they preferred group mentoring because of its structure and specified activities. They also expressed concerns about the "intimacy" of one-on-one mentoring and the substantial time commitment it requires.

Group programs are also more likely to specifically target youth from ethnic and racial minority groups and serve proportionally more African-American youth than do one-on-one programs. Interviews in our current study further suggest that youth in school-based group programs are often referred by teachers and peers, supporting the hypothesis that these programs may reach youth who might be missed by traditional recruitment strategies.

Can Positive Relationships Develop between Mentors and Youth in the Group Setting?

Mentors' goals. In contrast to the central goal of one-on-one mentoring programs—the creation of a strong relationship between the adult and youth—group mentors in the current study reported central goals of helping youth get along with others and teaching behavioral skills to group members. Many group mentors do hope to create strong relationships with youth: more than half of the mentors in this study wanted to be a confidante for the youth in their group. But their goals are more predominantly shaped by an interest in promoting positive peer interactions.

The nature of the relationships. The quality and intensity of mentor-youth relationships reported in this study varied widely. Some were fairly distant, resembling more casual interactions between youth and a respected adult. Others were very close, intimate and significant to both mentor and youth.

Additionally, the small number of very strong mentor-youth relationships suggests that on average these relationships are not as strong or intense as those developed in traditional, one-on-one settings. Only about a quarter of mentors and youth reported feeling "very close" to each other. Similarly, only about a third of youth felt that qualities indicating strong attachment were "very true" of their mentors. Reflecting these findings, only about a quarter of mentors reported "a lot" of confiding by the youth in their groups, and only about half of youth participants reported at least "sometimes" engaging in more personal discussions (i.e., about things that worried, scared or angered them) with the mentor.

Despite moderate feelings of closeness expressed by these youth toward their adult mentors, the vast majority of youth did not prefer an exclusively one-on-one relationship with their mentor. This finding supports suggestions that youth want opportunities to interact with their peers and that some youth may prefer the group setting to one-on-one adult-youth interactions. It also suggests that for these youth, the mentor-youth relationship may not be the primary focus of their group experience.

Concerns about the mentor's ability to treat all youth in their groups equally were not supported in this sample. Although mentors reported feeling closer to some youth in their group than to others, 92 percent of youth said the mentors did not treat some group members better than others, suggesting very little differential treatment in these groups.

The relationship-building process. The wide variability in the quality of these group-based relationships raises the important question of why some group relationships are stronger than others. We found that group mentors who had strong relationships with their mentees exhibited behavior that was consistent with that of mentors in strong one-on-one relationships. These mentors:

- Met with their mentees regularly;
- Were sensitive to youth's preferences for activities and discussion topics;
- Had fun with youth and got to know them personally, rather than focusing exclusively on the program's designated activities; and
- Were open to one-on-one conversations with youth when needed.

What Challenges Does Group Mentoring Pose to Mentors?

When group mentors were asked about challenges they faced in implementing the group approach, they most often cited challenges focused on facilitating and managing peer interactions. Mentors discussed the difficulty of ensuring that all youth

get equal time to contribute to discussions and activities because more vocal group members can overshadow introverted youth. Youth with behavioral problems can also be disruptive and may require extra attention from the mentor to ensure that they do not negatively influence other group members.

Mentors also said that keeping youth interested and engaged in structured activities is another challenge they face when working with their groups, in part because of the variety of interests youth bring to the group. Group mentors also found it difficult to pursue inexpensive activities because of the cost of accommodating multiple youth. Keeping costs low was particularly challenging in the Be-A-Friend GMP community-based program because of the need to coordinate and pay for transportation of group members who live in different neighborhoods.

These challenges are significant, but they did not preclude program accomplishments. And contrary to concerns about negative youth experiences in these groups, reports of fighting, teasing or excluding youth from group interactions were very rare. These incidents may have been rare because these groups were fairly structured and interactions were carefully monitored and facilitated by the adult mentor, underscoring the importance of the mentor's facilitation role.

What Are the Potential Benefits of Group Mentoring?

The study's design and small sample preclude analyses of measurable impacts of the programs involved in this study. But to shed light on potential benefits of group mentoring, we present the following reported benefits drawn from both open-ended and structured interviews with mentors and youth.

One very important benefit, and the one most often cited by youth and mentors, is *improvements in social skills*. A majority of youth and mentors reported that youth improved their ability to work with peers. Participants reported that some youth became less shy and inhibited, improved their conversational skills, became more considerate or showed improvements in their ability to manage anger and conflict. Both mentors and peers appear to play a role in bringing about these changes. Peers' comments make youth aware of their behavior, and the group setting facilitates positive interactions among youth. For their part, mentors observe youth interactions, identify behaviors that need improvement, provide youth with constructive feedback and continually encourage positive interactions among group members.

Youth and mentors also reported *improvements in youth's relationships with teachers, parents and friends*. Mechanisms that seemed to generate these changes included advice from mentors and peers on how to handle problems with others and in a few cases direct intervention with teachers or parents by the mentor. Improvements in youth's social and behavioral skills may also have contributed to improvements in these relationships. Our interviews further suggest that the group setting facilitated the growth of youth's social circles by providing them with new friends; close to a third of youth participants indicated that they receive fairly high levels of peer support in their groups.

To a lesser extent, participants also cited *improved school performance* among some group members. Typically these improvements came about when mentors and peers gave direct help to group members in specific content areas and when they guided youth in developing general learning strategies. These direct efforts were most often reported in groups with an academic focus.

Similar to results from research on traditional mentoring, we found that close mentor-youth relationships seem to foster the strongest benefits. But peers also played a crucial role in yielding positive benefits for youth. Peers provided youth with academic help, friendship and important aspects of social support. Being exposed to youth in their group also helped some youth feel more comfortable interacting with others. Peer interactions also provided mentors with important information about youth's individual needs.

These findings portray group mentoring in a slightly different light from that proposed at the outset of this report. Group mentoring does not simply consist of several distinct adult-youth relationships developing independently in the context of a larger group. Rather, it is a context in which youth are mentored by a group that consists of an

adult and one or more peers. Both the adult mentor and peers seem to play crucial interactive roles in bringing about positive youth outcomes. In this way, determining the value of group mentoring by focusing only on the mentor-youth relationship may underestimate the potential of this approach.

Conclusions

Based on results from this preliminary study, we offer the following conclusions:

- Group mentoring is attracting a group of volunteers who may be less likely to volunteer for one-on-one mentoring.
- The on-site programming of many group programs facilitates recruitment of youth who may have been missed by more traditional recruitment techniques.
- Although most group mentors want to develop personal relationships with youth, they appear to place more emphasis on improving peer interactions.
- Mentor-youth relationships can develop in group settings, but the quality of these relationships varied widely in this study and on average were not as strong or intense as what might be expected from relationships developing in traditional, one-on-one settings. The quality of these relationships was dependent on the group's focus and activities as well as on the mentor's approach.
- Participants reported improvements in youth's social skills, relationships with individuals outside of the group and to a lesser extent academic performance and attitudes. These changes were fostered in large part through peer interactions central to the group mentoring format and not incorporated in the traditional mentoring model.

The study also suggests the following questions for future research:

- *Do the benefits reported by youth and mentors in this study translate into observable changes in youth's behavior?* As noted, this study is limited to mentors' and youth's reports of benefits. To answer the question definitively, impact studies of group mentoring programs are needed.
- *To the extent that these programs do produce real benefits, how are they fostered?* This study suggests that the quality of the mentor-youth relationship may play an important role in determining the benefits of group mentoring. Additionally, peer interactions and the adult's careful facilitation of these processes were also central to group accomplishments, as were the purpose and setting of the group. Future research should clarify the extent to which these group characteristics and processes foster benefits.
- *Are these programs cost effective?* Although the cost of group mentoring is lower than that of traditional mentoring, we cannot yet determine whether, dollar for dollar, this approach yields benefits for youth comparable to those generated by one-on-one programs. Again, only an impact study can address this issue.
- *To what extent does group mentoring provide youth with important components of mentoring?* Although this study cannot definitively answer this question, our findings suggest that youth can get important components of mentoring—like support, guidance and friendship—from group mentoring. However, the extent to which youth receive these mentoring components may vary widely. Analyses of larger samples across a wider variety of group programs should be used to outline the criteria that define this mentoring model and under what circumstances these groups meet important criteria of mentoring.

While many questions concerning group mentoring remain, the results of this preliminary study indicate that it is a promising approach. Reports from both mentors and youth suggest that group mentoring may have the capacity to make positive contributions to the healthy development of young people. But groups vary widely in size, structure, focus, activities and match characteristics. And like traditional matches, they also vary in the extent to which they ultimately benefit youth. For this reason, practitioners must continue to develop and refine this approach. Nevertheless, the strong potential of group-based mentoring makes it all the more imperative to conduct additional research that will indicate whether group mentoring indeed leads to measurable positive outcomes for youth.

Introduction

The youth mentoring movement developed from the simple but powerful premise that if disadvantaged youth can connect with nonparental adults who provide them with support and guidance, they will be more likely to develop successfully (O'Sullivan, 1991; Williams and Kornblum, 1985; Werner and Smith, 1982). For almost a century, agencies like Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) have been establishing mentoring relationships by matching disadvantaged youth with adult volunteers who serve as friends and role models. Typically, the match is one on one and the adult makes a one-year commitment to the program. The pair's meetings take place regularly in locations of their choosing and involve a variety of unstructured activities.

There is strong evidence that this "traditional" mentoring model is effective. Research shows that mentoring improves youth's academic achievement and school attendance (Tierney and Grossman, 1995; McPartland and Nettles, 1991) and decreases substance abuse (LoSciuto et al., 1996).

Yet programs based on the traditional model have not been able to reach all the youth who are in need of the benefits mentoring can provide. Volunteers are scarce, and those who do come forward must go through extensive and sometimes lengthy screening processes (Morrow and Styles, 1995; Furano et al., 1993; Freedman, 1992). The result is that many youth are left on long waiting lists. BBBS estimates that over 47,000 youth are waiting to be matched with a mentor in their programs (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 1999). And because traditional programs rely heavily on parent referrals (Furano et al., 1993), youth whose parents are unaware of these programs or do not fully understand what they have to offer may never even be referred.

To overcome some of these limitations, practitioners have developed several innovative approaches to mentoring. For example, some programs hold mentoring meetings in particular places, such as schools and other youth-serving organizations. These organizations offer structure and support that some volunteers find appealing. They also have access to large numbers of youth, minimizing the need for parent referrals. In this way, programs based in these settings reach volunteers and youth who otherwise might not get involved in traditional mentoring (Herrera, 1999).

In addition to changes in the places where mentoring occurs, some agencies have also developed models that change the structure of the mentor-youth relationship. Group mentoring, in which mentors meet regularly with small groups of youth, is one of a number of such approaches that is gaining popularity. About 20 percent of mentoring programs today serve at least some youth in a group format (Sipe and Roder, 1999).

Arguments for and against Group Mentoring

Group mentoring programs are becoming more popular, in part because they eliminate some of the obstacles associated with the traditional, one-on-one approach. First, by providing several youth with one mentor, these programs use volunteers more intensively than one-on-one programs. As a result, they reach large numbers of youth while expending relatively little effort on recruitment, screening and supervision of mentors. This helps lower the cost of these programs per youth served relative to traditional one-on-one programs (Fountain and Arbreton, 1999).

Second, some mentors and youth may prefer group-based relationships. Many volunteers may be uncomfortable meeting one on one with youth. Many youth also want opportunities to interact with their peers—opportunities that are critical to their development (Sullivan 1953; Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1932). In adolescence, peers take on an especially important role as youth begin to spend more time with people outside the family and to rely on peers extensively for support and guidance (Hendry et al., 1992; Blyth et al., 1982). Group mentoring may, in this way, provide youth with a familiar, comfortable setting in which they can interact with peers, while also receiving guidance and support from an adult. By involving youth's peers, group mentoring also provides mentors with an opportunity to observe youth in the context of peer interactions, possibly providing mentors with valuable insight into youth's social behavior.

Some also argue that group mentoring complements the traditional approach by helping the mentoring field to reflect more accurately the many contexts in which youth actually receive mentoring in their daily lives. For example, Philip and Hendry (1996) found that many youth receive key components of mentoring, such as support, advice and challenge, in the context of informal groups—both peer groups and groups of youth meeting with an adult. They argue that, like one-on-one adult-youth relationships, these experiences are also influential in youth's lives and should be incorporated in how we view mentoring. Others have similarly argued for an inclusive approach to mentoring that recognizes and supports more than one model, including group-based mentoring (McHale, 1990).

But some practitioners are skeptical of the value of group mentoring. Some even question whether this approach should be considered mentoring. Relationship development is central to current definitions of mentoring (Morrow and Styles, 1995; Flaxman et al., 1988). Because the group setting decreases the amount of attention mentors can give to individual youth, it may prevent the development of strong mentor-youth relationships. And because the quality of the mentor-youth relationship helps determine the effects of mentoring (Grossman and Johnson, 1999), groups may also be less likely than traditional matches to promote positive changes in youth.

Others have concerns about the group structure and its potential to expose youth to negative experiences. Group dynamics are complicated. Differential treatment, exclusion of youth from group interactions and negative interactions among youth can all occur in groups. Exposure to such experiences could negate whatever benefits group mentoring is intended to provide.

Research on Group Mentoring and Related Approaches

These potential strengths and concerns are significant. Yet little research has been conducted to support or challenge these views.

Most current research on group mentoring has evaluated outcomes of specific programs rather than addressing more basic questions about how the approach is implemented. Evaluations of programs in which an adult mentor meets with a small group of youth have focused mainly on interventions with very specific goals, such as substance abuse prevention or academic assistance. These studies have yielded mixed results. Mentors participating in an evaluation by Gittman and Cassata (1994), for example, indicated that they experienced bonding with youth in their group; however, few differences in the areas of self-esteem, study skills and academic performance were found between youth who had participated in the program and those in a comparison group. Simmons and Parsons (1983) reported some positive effects of a small group workshop on youth's perceived competence in school, social relationships and general life events, but only for working-class adolescent girls, not for girls from lower-class backgrounds.

Other related approaches that show some promise include classroom-based approaches (e.g., Philliber and Allen, 1992) and peer mentoring programs in which youth leaders mentor a group of peers or a group leader facilitates a peer support group (e.g., O'Donnell et al., 1997; Blum and Jones, 1993; Jason and Rhodes, 1989). However, small samples in some of these studies make it difficult to draw final conclusions about the effectiveness of these approaches.

Despite these evaluations of specific group-based programs, practitioners and funders still know very little about youth's and mentors' experiences in these groups. Before undertaking more extensive and costly outcome evaluations of group mentoring programs, we need to know what group mentoring actually entails. We also need answers to some fundamental questions concerning the value of this approach. Key questions include:

- What do mentoring groups look like? Who participates in these groups? How much do they cost? What challenges, if any, does the group structure pose to mentors?
- Do group mentors want to create meaningful relationships with the youth in their groups? Can these relationships develop? If so, what processes help them develop?
- How might youth benefit from participation in mentoring groups? How are these benefits fostered?

Answering these questions will help us understand the extent to which this approach provides youth with important components of mentoring. It will also improve our understanding of other types of adult-youth interactions that take place outside the family. Most interactions between nonparental adults and youth occur in the context of groups—in the classroom, on sports teams, and in after-school and faith-based activities. Describing youth's experiences in mentoring groups can thus inform practitioners and policy makers involved or interested in many other types of adult-youth programming and activities.

Study Purpose and Methodology

To address the questions outlined, P/PV and the National Mentoring Partnership (see Appendix A) decided to take a preliminary look at some innovative group mentoring programs. The study's purpose is not to provide a final assessment of the value or effects of group mentoring. Rather, as a first step in studying the approach, the study offers insights about the form and function of mentoring groups and the potential of this approach to create mentoring relationships, yield benefits for youth and provide a valuable complement to the traditional one-on-one model.

To achieve these goals, we visited three programs that serve youth in a group format:

- Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County Group Mentoring Program (Be-A-Friend GMP) in Buffalo, New York;
- Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS in Los Angeles, California; and
- YouthFriends in Kansas City, Missouri.

To learn more about the goals and structure of these programs, we spoke with program staff and, in school-based programs, to school staff. We also conducted in-depth semistructured interviews with 52 youth and 19 mentors. Most of the mentors worked with at least one youth we interviewed. In two of the programs, we also conducted focus groups with 12 additional mentors. We did not observe mentoring groups in the three programs. We, thus, have only reports of group processes, challenges and potential benefits. However, we tried, when possible, to corroborate findings by cross-checking information and observations from several respondents. (See Appendix B for a detailed description of our sample and methodology.)

We chose to study these three programs because of their promising work in the group mentoring field.[1] They also represent three distinct approaches to group mentoring. YouthFriends is a technical assistance organization that supports school districts in setting up and running school-based mentoring programs. The organization serves youth in both one-on-one and group formats. Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS is an exclusively group mentoring program in which teams of mentors work with groups of middle-school students using a curriculum focused on team building, leadership and community service. The Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters Program of Erie County operates both a group mentoring program and a one-on-one, community-based program. The Group Mentoring Program (Be-A-Friend GMP), which is the focus of this study, hires paid staff to serve as mentors to small groups of youth, many of whom will eventually be matched one on one with volunteers in the traditional program.

The report also draws from data collected in two earlier, larger studies of program staff and mentors. In the first of these studies, P/PV interviewed 291 mentors working with youth in a group format and 802 mentors matched with youth one on one (Herrera et al., 2000); we use results from this mentor survey to outline characteristics of mentoring groups and the mentors and youth involved. In the second study (Sipe and Roder, 1999), program staff from 722 mentoring programs throughout the country were interviewed about program practices; results from this program survey are used primarily to support findings from the mentor survey. (See Appendix B for descriptions of these studies.)

A word of caution regarding the study's findings is in order. Descriptions of the characteristics of group mentors and the groups they serve are based

[1] The report sometimes refers to the study of these three programs as the "current study" to distinguish it from earlier studies that are also used in our analyses.

on two large national data sets. However, the analyses of the quality of mentor-youth relationships and of the potential benefits and challenges of group mentoring rely on more limited evidence. These findings are drawn from visits to three mature programs chosen specifically because of their solid and innovative work in the field; therefore, they should not be generalized to the entire field of group mentoring with its diversity of programs. Our samples of both mentors and youth from each of the programs were also small and not random—staff recruited interested participants.

Nevertheless, we believe that what we learned about the groups involved in the three participating programs can contribute to an understanding of group mentoring. Our goal was not to evaluate these *programs* but to gather case-study evidence that highlights the dynamics and processes at work in different types of *groups*—for example, groups with an academic or nonacademic focus or groups in which mentors take particular approaches to working with youth. Future research should use larger samples and eventually controlled studies to build on the methodology of this initial study.

Structure of the Report

We address three sets of questions in this report:

What is group mentoring? As practitioners try to increase the field's capacity to serve youth, group mentoring is becoming more widespread. Yet we know little about what this model entails and whom it reaches. Without this information, we have little basis for determining its potential to make a significant contribution to the mentoring field. In chapter II, we use data from our national mentor and program surveys and from interviews of mentors and youth in the current study to outline the structure, location and activities of mentoring groups as well as the challenges that mentors face when working with these groups. We also use our national data to describe characteristics of mentors and youth in group programs and examine how mentors and youth in the current study became involved in their programs.

Can positive relationships develop between mentors and youth in the group setting? In chapter III, we address three questions. First, do mentors want to create relationships with the youth in their groups? Second, what kind of mentoring relationships develop in these groups? And third, what factors may help foster close relationships in this setting?

What are some potential benefits of group mentoring? In chapter IV, we present mentors' and youth's views on the benefits of group mentoring for youth participants. We also discuss group processes through which these benefits may be fostered.

Chapter V summarizes our findings. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of the report's findings for the mentoring field and for future research.

What is Group Mentoring?

Although there is considerable interest in how group mentoring programs might help expand the number of youth who receive mentoring, little is known about this approach. To understand the potential contributions of group mentoring, we need answers to several basic questions. First, what does group mentoring entail? Most studies to date have focused on the traditional, one-on-one mentoring model, and wide variation in group programs makes it difficult to ascribe a uniform definition to this approach (Sipe and Roder, 1999). Consequently, our knowledge about the size, structure, activities, composition and cost of mentoring groups is limited.

Second, we need to know more about the mentors and youth involved in these programs. Who participates in group mentoring? Are these programs reaching participants who differ from those involved in traditional mentoring?

Third, we also need information about the special challenges that group mentoring may present to mentors. Challenges to one-on-one mentors are often focused on establishing communication and building trust with youth (Sipe, 1999). Does the group structure pose other challenges to mentors? If so, what are these challenges?

In this chapter, we address these questions by presenting data from P/PV's national mentor and program surveys and from in-depth interviews with mentors and youth involved in the current study. The first part of the chapter focuses on the youth and mentors themselves: we describe the mentors and youth involved in group mentoring nationwide and report on how group participants in the current study became involved in their programs. Then we outline the characteristics, structure and costs associated with mentoring groups. We conclude with a discussion of challenges associated with the group structure that were reported by mentors in the current study.

Mentors and Youth in Group Programs

Mentors. Volunteers recruited by traditional mentoring programs are typically white, college-educated, middle- and upper-income men and women between the ages of 22 and 49. Less educated, older and lower-income volunteers remain an underutilized resource (Furano et al., 1993; Freedman, 1988).

Our data suggest that group programs are able to attract some of these volunteers whom other programs have been less successful in recruiting. While group and one-on-one programs recruit volunteers from similar sources—the general community, colleges and universities, businesses and churches[2]—the individuals who ultimately volunteer in group matches differ from those in one-on-one matches in several ways. As shown in Table 1, group mentors are generally older than one-on-one mentors and are more likely to be female and African American. Group mentors also have lower levels of education,[3] are more likely to be retired and are less likely to be employed full time. Reflecting these differences, group mentors also have lower incomes than one-on-one mentors.[4]

Discussions with 31 mentors from the three study sites about why they chose to volunteer further suggest that many group mentors probably would not have volunteered in more traditional mentoring programs. Two-thirds of these mentors specifically mentioned characteristics of the group format that appealed to them or aspects of the traditional one-on-one model that they did not like.

[2] Of the 14 sources listed in the program survey, only one showed a significant difference between group and one-on-one programs: more one-on-one programs recruit from the general community (63% compared with 53% of group programs, $p < .05$). See Appendix B for a complete list of recruitment sources.

[3] Group mentors in the current study have higher levels of education than group mentors in the national sample; most mentors in the current study had at least some college education (see Appendix B, Table B2).

[4] Some of these differences between group and one-on-one mentors (i.e., age, income, employment status) may result, in part, from the large number of group volunteers in our mentor survey participating in Foster Grandparent programs (24%). These programs recruit lower-income, older volunteers, many of whom are retired.

Table 1
Differences Between Mentors in Group and One-on-One Matches Nationwide

Characteristics	Group mentors	One-on-one mentors
Gender*		
Female	79%	60%
Male	21%	40%
Race/ethnicity*		
African American	33%	15%
White	56%	76%
Hispanic	5%	5%
Other	6%	4%
Age (years)*		
Under 22	18%	20%
22 to 35	18%	32%
36 to 49	21%	25%
50 or older	43%	24%
Education*		
High school or less	42%	26%
Some postsecondary	27%	26%
BA or higher	32%	48%
Employment status*		
Student	14%	16%
Homemaker	3%	2%
Full time	36%	58%
Part time	9%	8%
Retired	34%	14%
Unemployed	3%	3%
Income*		
Less than $25,000	45%	19%
$25,000 to $54,999	32%	39%
$55,000 or more	23%	42%
Sample size**	291	802

* All differences between group and one-on-one mentors are significant at p<.001.
** Sample sizes vary for each category because of missing cases. Sample sizes shown reflect the maximum sample size among the individual categories.
Source: Mentor Survey.

For example, six mentors said that they joined their program specifically because of the activities and structure of the group format:

> *The program already had a set of activities, so that was really nice. All we had to do was—we looked [the curriculum] over before [our meeting], we prepared and we followed it. That made it a lot easier for us.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 12][5]

Data from our program survey support this finding, showing that while most group and one-on-one mentoring programs nationwide do not focus on specific activities, group programs are more likely than one-on-one programs to do so. These targeted activities can include community service, life-skills training, academics (e.g., tutoring, homework help) or career-related activities (e.g., job shadowing, creating a resume).[6]

Another characteristic of the group environment that appealed to group mentors was the opportunity to work with more than one youth. Seven mentors mentioned that they were attracted to this aspect of their programs.

About half of the mentors also mentioned specific components of one-on-one mentoring that they disliked. Four mentors, for example, expressed concerns that a one-on-one relationship would be too intimate:

> *One-on-one [mentoring], while I'm sure it's appropriate in some instances, I think it could get a little too serious.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 13]

[5] Throughout the report, we reference quotes by speaker and, where relevant, group number. Group numbers were assigned to each distinct group we heard about. The numbers are intended to help detect patterns in findings within and between groups. Numbers one through six were assigned to groups from YouthFriends; seven through 19 were assigned to groups from TEAMWORKS; and 20 through 34 were assigned to groups from Be-A-Friend GMP.

[6] Sixteen percent of group programs and 8 percent of one-on-one programs focus on targeted activities. This difference is significant at p<.01.

Another concern about traditional mentoring shared by six mentors was that being in a one-on-one match would be too time consuming:

> *I think the commitment is one of the most important parts, and I wouldn't be prepared to make the commitment for as long as you would need to have that be a very strong relationship [in a one-on-one match].*
>
> [Mentor; Focus group]

Data from our program survey confirm that one-on-one programs require a lengthier commitment and more frequent mentor-youth meetings than group programs.[7] These less demanding requirements in group programs may make volunteering more feasible for college students and others who have tight or changing schedules but at the same time may have important implications for the relationships that develop in these programs. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter III.

Youth. Because our national surveys focused on program practices and mentors' experiences within these programs, we have very little information on youth characteristics at a national level. However, the data that we do have and our discussions with youth involved in the current study suggest that, like mentors, the youth involved in group mentoring programs may differ in some ways from those reached by more traditional programs.

Our program survey shows that 13 percent of group programs target youth from ethnic or racial minority groups (compared with only 4% of one-on-one programs).[8] Group programs also serve proportionally more African-American youth than one-on-one programs (47% and 29%, respectively).[9]

In traditional programs, parents and guardians are the most common referral source (Furano et al., 1993). Discussions with youth in the current study suggest that parents and guardians are also a common referral source for group programs: twenty-one percent of youth reported that they were referred to their program in this way. But these discussions also point to a wider range of other referral sources for group programs: teachers (19%), peers (15%) and relatives (15%) (see Table 2). Referrals by parents and nonschool-related adults were reported only by youth from the community-based program, while teacher referrals were reported only by youth in the two school-based programs. These teacher referrals may help school-based group programs serve youth who might otherwise be missed by traditional recruitment techniques.

Group programs also reach youth through peer recruitment. Eight youth (all from school-based programs) reported that they joined their groups specifically because of the encouragement of friends who were already in the program. For example, one youth told us that before she joined the program, her friends spoke positively about their group experiences and their mentor. Their opinions not only encouraged her to join but also set the stage for the development of a very close relationship with her mentor. In another case, an academically struggling youth recruited his friends, who were also not doing well in school. His mentor's comments suggest that this referral process helped the program reach youth who otherwise might never have been served:

> *They would have never filled out a piece of paper [by themselves]…But the door was open and [the first youth] said, "You know…if you need help, why don't you come on in." I think otherwise [the first youth] may have been the only one who was ever part of the group.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 6]

Peer recruitment may help make youth more comfortable with joining. Knowing that familiar youth will be present in the groups may also make mentor-youth interaction less intimidating for youth. Naturally, one-on-one mentoring programs offer fewer opportunities for this kind of peer

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[7] Fifty-six percent of one-on-one programs require that mentors commit to their program for at least a year, while only 30 percent of group programs require this level of commitment ($p<.001$). Also, 70 percent of one-on-one programs require that mentors and youth have weekly contact, while only 58 percent of group programs make this stipulation ($p<.01$).

[8] The difference between group and one-on-one programs is significant at $p<.001$.

[9] ibid.

Table 2
Recruitment of Youth in the Current Study

Referring individual or group*	Be-A-Friend GMP	TEAMWORKS	YouthFriends	Total
Parent	59%	—	—	21%
Teacher	—	19%	41%	19%
Peers	—	31%	18%	15%
Sibling/cousin	5%	13%	—	15%
School-related adult (e.g., counselor)	5%	—	24%	10%
Self-nominated	—	31%	—	10%
Nonschool-related adult (e.g., family friend, aunt)	16%	—	—	6%
Sample size	19	16	17	52

* Some youth were recruited through more than one method. Percentages indicate the frequency that youth mentioned each method through which they were recruited.
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because youth could report more than one referral source, and some youth reported no referral source (i.e., data are missing).

recruitment, suggesting another route through which group programs may reach youth who may not have gotten involved in traditional mentoring.

Group Structure

To understand the nature of participants' experiences in mentoring groups and to determine the potential contributions of this approach, it is also important to clarify the size, structure, activities and costs of mentoring groups. In this section, we use data from our national surveys and from our visits to the three study sites to describe these group characteristics.

Group size. Data from our mentor survey indicate great variation in the size of mentoring groups, supporting findings by Sipe and Roder (1999). Group mentors reported being matched with groups ranging from two to 32 youth. Eighty percent of groups, however, are fairly small, serving 15 or fewer youth: groups of six to 10 youth are the most common, followed by groups of three to five, and finally, groups of two (see Table 3). The average group serves 10 youth.[10]

Table 3
Group Characteristics: Group Size

Number of youth in group	Percentage of mentors reporting
2	16%
3 to 5	25%
6 to 10	28%
11 to 15	11%
16 to 20	9%
21 to 32	10%
Sample size: 254	

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of missing cases and rounding.
Source: Mentor Survey.

[10] The median group size is seven.

A Day in the Life of Youth: Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County, Group Mentoring Program (Be-A-Friend GMP)*

Eleven-year-old Randy waves goodbye to his mother and hops into the van with his mentor, Sam. Randy comes from a single-parent home. Two years ago his mom contacted the Big Brothers Big Sisters program because she wanted him to have a positive, male role model. But because there were no Big Brothers available at the time, Randy was placed into a group program. He really likes his counselor, though; he's almost as great as a Big Brother. And the other boys in his group are fun. None of them go to his school, but he feels really comfortable around them because they have been together for a couple of years now.

While Randy exchanges stories about the day with the three other boys, Sam drives the guys to a park. Sam is in his early twenties and had experience with youth work in college. He heard about the program through his college and was hired immediately after graduation. He runs eight groups with boys who are in elementary or middle school. The boys in Randy's group are all ten and eleven years old. Four days a week Sam picks up different groups of boys. He meets with each group once every other week. They hang out and do activities together for about four hours in the evening. Sam tries to remember that his role is to be a positive influence in the children's lives but that he is not to get too close to them. An extremely close relationship might make it difficult for the boys if they are taken away from the group and matched with a Big Brother.

"Am I going to have to separate you two?" Sam gives the boys a stern look from his rearview mirror. Many of the boys in this group do not understand appropriate behavior. For the last several weeks one of the boys has been especially prone to act out, and Sam is frustrated that his discipline has to put a damper on the spirit of the entire group. Fortunately, Sam has been working closely with the Big Brothers Big Sisters case manager to try to deal with the disruptive boy. The case manager has informed him of some problems the youth has been dealing with at home that may be negatively influencing his behavior. Sam has been spending extra time at the boy's house trying to establish a positive relationship with him. Sam and the case manager do their best to communicate to this boy that he is an important member of the group and that they need to work on his behavior so he can stay in it. The relationship with this boy has been a big challenge for Sam, and he is glad that he can learn from other mentors' experiences during their weekly staff meetings.

At the park, everybody piles out of the van. "I want to be captain!" Randy yells. Teams are quickly chosen and Sam joins in. Today is a recreation day—the boys' favorite type of activity. Next week the activity coordinator has scheduled a visit to a nursing home. The boys are much more comfortable with sports but are willing to give it a chance.

A few hours later, the boys are hot and sweaty and ready to head back home. On the way back, one boy asks questions about what college is like. Sam shares his experiences and encourages the boys to keep up their grades so they can go to college, too.

"Hey, Sam! Drop me off last!" The boys want to have the privilege of having their mentor all to themselves, and Sam tries to vary the drop-off schedule to accommodate them. Randy is the last boy to be taken home. At Randy's house, Sam steps inside for a few minutes and talks with Randy's mom. She is pleased with Sam's influence on her son. She often calls Sam "her son's Big Brother," but Sam doesn't mind. The truth is, he'll be a little sad when these kids are matched with their real Big Brothers.

* The "Day in the Life of Youth" descriptions are composites, based on interviews conducted with youth, mentors and program staff.

Groups involved in the current study were also fairly small, serving from 2 to 16 youth. The most common group sizes were between 3 and 5 (54%) and 6 to 10 (25%). Only 8 percent of the youth we interviewed belonged to groups serving more than 10 youth. Groups of four or five were mainly from YouthFriends or Be-A-Friend GMP, while groups larger than five were almost exclusively from TEAMWORKS. Four youth from YouthFriends were in groups of two.

Team mentoring. There is also variability in the number of volunteers matched with these groups. Fifty-four percent of group mentors reported working with one or more mentors on a "team." Mentoring teams range from as few as two to as many as 11 mentors. Two-, three- and four-person teams are the most common, accounting for 80 percent of all teams.

Of course, assigning several mentors to one group can greatly reduce its youth-to-mentor ratio. For example, matching a team of three mentors with a

A Day in the Life of Youth: Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS Program

The last bell has just rung, signaling the end of a busy school day. Mrs. Williams is gathering things together at her desk when Amanda rushes into the classroom. They exchange cheerful greetings. Amanda updates Mrs. Williams on the things that have happened to her since second period when they last saw each other. While they wait for the other group members to arrive, Mrs. Williams gives Amanda advice about how to deal with some problems she is having with a friend. While they are talking, Angela, a mentor, comes in with the other youth from the group. Angela works at a bank in the city and volunteers in the program, assisting Mrs. Williams, a "teacher mentor." A third mentor, Liz, used to work with the group as well. As a college student, Liz found it increasingly difficult to fit group sessions into her already hectic schedule. Now just Angela and Mrs. Williams work with this group of seventh- and eighth-grade youth.

The group has been meeting for two months, since the beginning of the school year. A few youth in the group had also been in the program during the previous year, but they were in different groups with other mentors. They had fun in their other groups, and they enjoy this one, too. They like their mentors; each one contributes something different to the group. The youth who have Mrs. Williams as a teacher are a little closer to her because they spend so much time with her in the classroom. They see her as both a teacher and a trusted friend.

Today the group consists of eight youth, five girls and three boys, most of whom are Hispanic (as are most youth in the school). Sometimes more youth attend, but today some are rehearsing for the school play.

Angela hands out pieces of construction paper that represent parts of hearts. The youth stop talking to one another and ask what they are supposed to do. Today's lesson in the curriculum is on communication, and soon the icebreaker is underway. The students scramble around the room trying to find the person whose construction paper piece will form a complete heart with theirs. Once they are paired, Mrs. Williams distributes a handout that gives examples of positive and negative forms of communication. The youth are challenged to use proper communication skills as they interview their partners with the questions provided.

The exercise sparks a conversation among the group members about personal experiences they have had involving poor communication. The mentors decide to pursue this topic rather than moving to the next planned activity because it seems to be important to the group. One girl talks about how she feels upset when her mom is clearly preoccupied while she is trying to share something important with her. Other youth chime in with examples of how their parents do not really hear what they are saying. Angela and Mrs. Williams facilitate the conversation so that everyone gets a chance to contribute.

As the conversation wraps up, the mentors move the youth into the next activity. Youth imagine they are in outer space and need to make an emergency exit from one shuttle into another. They must remain linked and not touch the electrical wire (tape) that joins the two shuttles (chairs) together. As they carry out the exercise, the youth laugh and frantically yell instructions to one another. Afterward, they discuss the kinds of communication that did and did not work well.

It is 5:00 p.m. The group session comes to a close; the next meeting is in two weeks. As the youth leave together, they talk among themselves about when and where the next TEAMWORKS field trip will take place. The mentors head for the mentor debriefing meeting in the gym, where they will discuss group-related issues with other mentors from their school. Angela wants to get some advice about drawing out Lupe, one of the quieter youth, to help her feel like a part of the group. At the meeting, Angela talks with Lupe's teacher, who is also a mentor in the program. The teacher explains which methods have been more successful with Lupe in the classroom and gives Angela some ideas about how to make her feel more comfortable in the next group meeting.

group of 15 youth reduces the ratio from 15:1 to 5:1. In fact, in our national sample, one-third of matches have youth-to-mentor ratios of 2:1 or less.[11] Twenty-nine percent have ratios over 2:1 and up to 5:1, and only 16 percent of matches have youth-to-mentor ratios greater than 10:1 (see Table 4).

Team mentoring was not, however, the predominant structure used in the study sites. Of the three sites, TEAMWORKS is the only program in which groups have more than one mentor. In this program, a group of 10 to 15 youth is matched with a team of three mentors: a teacher, a college student and a community volunteer.[12]

[11] Ratios of less than 2:1 reflect mentoring groups in which mentors outnumber youth.

[12] Assignment of a full team is not always feasible. Four of the 10 TEAMWORKS mentors we met were on a full team, while four worked in pairs. Two mentors led their group alone.

Group matches. Assigning mentors to groups of youth reduces the extent to which youth and mentors can be matched according to shared characteristics. This may contribute to the large number of cross-gender and cross-race matches in group programs. Data from our program survey indicate that, on average, 27 percent of matches in group programs are cross gender and 41 percent are cross race.[13] While these cross-race matches may initially limit youth's ability to identify with their mentors, they may also allow young people to interact with adults with whom they otherwise have little close contact.

As was the case for groups in the national surveys, about a third of the groups in the current study were cross gender. These were mainly groups in TEAMWORKS, which generally included both girls and boys. All groups in Be-A-Friend GMP and most in YouthFriends were same sex and matched with a same-sex mentor. The only cross-gender matches from YouthFriends belonged to fluid groups in which the mentor meets with different youth during each meeting.[14] Cross-race mentor-youth matches were found in groups across all three programs in the current study.

Mentoring groups are also fairly diverse in the risk factors characterizing individual youth in the group. We asked mentors in our national study how many of the youth in their groups could be characterized by specific risk factors. Their responses suggest that most groups do not focus exclusively on "high-risk" youth (see Table 5). For example, no mentors indicated working with groups in which all youth were pregnant or parenting teens, and few worked with groups in which all were from single-parent homes (10%), lived in poverty (11%), had been held back in school (3%) or were juvenile offenders (12%). However, many groups serve at least "a few" youth who have these risk factors. For example, 27 percent reported that a few youth in their groups were from single-parent homes; about a third worked with groups in which a few came from impoverished households; and close to half reported working with groups in which a few had trouble in school. Nineteen percent of these mentors said that

A Day in the Life of Youth: YouthFriends

Nonfluid Academic Group

The halls of the middle school are suddenly chaotic as youth slam locker doors and run to catch their bus. Three eighth graders push through the crowd and make their way to the cafeteria to meet their mentor. There is a math exam this Friday, and they are not exactly looking forward to this review session, but they are looking forward to seeing their mentor, Mr. Grants. He has a way of explaining math that makes it come alive. And he is just a cool guy to know. He cares about them and does not give up on them—even when they make big mistakes. Although his job is to help them bring up their grades in math, he sometimes gets into their lives a little bit as well. There was the time that Mr. Grants pulled Mike aside to ask why he was getting into trouble so much lately. It is these moments when Mr. Grants takes a personal interest in their lives that the boys know he cares about them.

When the three boys are seated with their books out, Mr. Grants looks at them sternly. "Did you study?" All three boys nod solemnly. Mr. Grants asks them some questions about the chapter, and they are at a loss. The boys groan as he quickly directs them to the chapter review section of the textbook. Before long, they are having animated discussions about an algebra problem. Mr. Grants has a way of explaining things that makes learning fun and helps make the facts stick.

Before they know it, the entire hour has passed. "Remember," Mr. Grants advises them, "you have the potential to succeed. Some people might tell you that you can't do any better. It's your job to prove them wrong." The boys like it when he says things like that because no one else seems to expect much from them. All three were failing math just a few months ago, but they are now getting Cs and Bs. The boys resolve to do their best on this upcoming test, and Mr. Grants promises a celebration if they all pass.

[13] These percentages reported by group programs are significantly larger than those reported by one-on-one programs for cross-gender (13%) and cross-race (27%) matches ($p<.001$).

[14] Staff from YouthFriends estimate that fluid groups comprise about ten percent of all YouthFriends groups, though this percentage depends to a great extent on the particular school district.

Fluid Academic Group

It is Thursday, and Alberto is looking forward to seeing his mentor. He has not been selected to meet with him for the past three weeks, but he knows his teacher will pick him today because he needs some extra help with his essay. All the kids in his classroom want to go to group because they get out of class and get help with schoolwork. Because no more than four youth are allowed to attend each session, the teacher rotates her selection of who will go.

Finally, midway through the period, Mr. Adams makes his way into the fifth-grade classroom. He talks briefly with the teacher, who explains the work that needs to be done today and selects two girls and two boys, one of them Alberto, for extra assistance. The four head to the library with Mr. Adams, where they take turns sharing their essays for an upcoming class competition.

Mr. Adams is retired. He enjoys working with the young people and is beginning to get to know them a little because he always works with the same three classrooms of students. His main goal is to give an edge to students who struggle academically by providing them with opportunities to excel, which he feels leads to increased confidence in the classroom. Alberto appreciates that Mr. Adams sometimes teaches him things before they are presented in class. It really helps him to understand the new lessons. Alberto also appreciates Mr. Adams' patience; Mr. Adams often works with Alberto again and again until he fully understands a concept.

The bell rings just as Mr. Adams begins to give the last girl in the group some suggestions for editing her essay. Alberto wishes he could stay in the group longer—30 minutes is not enough time to talk about anything other than schoolwork. He wonders what Mr. Adams likes to do besides help out in school, but if they talk about these things, they would never finish the lessons for the day.

Alberto walks back to class with the other youth, excited to show his teacher the essay Mr. Adams helped him edit. Now, instead of dreading English, he sometimes even looks forward to it. He knows he can do well with Mr. Adams' help.

Nonacademic Group

Chantelle hurries from her science class to the cafeteria, where she waves to her mentor, Pat. Pat is a middle-aged woman who volunteers once a week during her lunch break from work. She has been meeting with Chantelle and another middle-school student, Sarah, for several years. The focus of their group has changed over that time. In the beginning, Pat gave the girls clarinet lessons during a free period at school. Now that the girls are in middle school, Pat joins them only for lunch. Sometimes she meets with each girl separately for half an hour. This is just fine with Chantelle and Sarah because they enjoy having their mentor's undivided attention.

Today over lunch, Pat invites Chantelle to a play she plans to attend this weekend. Later, she will also extend the invitation to Sarah. Meeting outside of school is not part of the program, but they have been meeting for six years, and their relationship has grown beyond the parameters of YouthFriends; Pat understands that it is not a YouthFriends-sanctioned activity. Plus Pat knows both girls' moms quite well by now.

As the bell rings, Chantelle jumps up and gives Pat a hug. She has many more things to tell her, but maybe she will call her during the week. To the girls, Pat seems like a second mother. The fact that she is a good listener and an understanding person makes both girls comfortable and eager to share almost anything with her.

Table 4
Youth-to-Mentor Ratio in Group Matches

Youth-to-mentor ratio	Percentage of mentors reporting
2:1 or less	34%
More than 2:1 and up to 5:1	29%
More than 5:1 and up to 10:1	20%
More than 10:1 and up to 20:1	11%
More than 20:1	6%

Sample size: 251

Source: Mentor Survey.

only a few of their mentees were good with people, further indicating that the groups had a mixture of youth who lack social skills and those who are more socially skilled. Diversity in these groups is potentially important because it may help foster behavioral change by providing high-risk youth with a "positive peer group" and its positive values and attitudes (Feldman et al., 1987).

Group location. Over 90 percent of group mentors nationwide reported that their groups meet consistently in one location, most typically schools. Groups also meet at community centers, other youth organizations or the program office (see Table 6). All TEAMWORKS groups and all but two of the YouthFriends groups involved in this study met exclusively at the youth's school, whereas Be-A-Friend GMP groups meet in a variety of locations, including youth-serving organizations, parks and recreation centers.[15]

Group meetings. As shown in Table 7, the amount of time mentors spend with their groups ranges from less than four to over 20 hours a month. Forty-three percent of mentors meet with their groups more than 10 hours a month. The average meeting time for groups in this national sample is 21 hours a month. Because mentors from Foster Grandparent programs represent a large portion of our sample (24%) and are often required to meet with their groups 20 hours a week (80 hours a month), we also calculated the average excluding mentors from this program. The average without these mentors is still substantial: about 14 hours a month.[16]

The groups participating in the current study spent less time together than these national averages. Thirty-seven percent of the youth we interviewed reported meeting with their group every week, while over half met only every other week (53%). Groups from YouthFriends met an average of three hours a month; the TEAMWORKS groups met five hours a month; and groups from Be-A-Friend GMP met about eight hours a month.

Group activities. The activities of groups nationwide vary from academic and structured activities (e.g., career exploration) to unstructured, social activities. Forty-one percent of mentors reported that their groups engage in academics "a lot." Many also devote time to talking through problems, hanging out or getting together with other mentoring groups (see Table 8).

Activities and focus also varied in the three programs involved in this study. Be-A-Friend GMP groups follow an activity agenda focused on community service, recreation, hygiene or health, and educational workshops. TEAMWORKS groups follow an activity-based curriculum that emphasizes team building, leadership development, cultural diversity and community service. YouthFriends does not have predefined, structured agendas for the groups. Each school district determines the structure and activities of their matches, based on the needs of the students and the interests of the mentors.

Cost. Previous research suggests that the annual cost per youth in group mentoring programs (about $408) is lower than that in one-on-one programs (about $1,030; Fountain and Arbreton, 1999). Data from the three programs involved in

[15] The two YouthFriends groups meet inside and outside of school. Meetings outside of school are not sanctioned by YouthFriends and thus are not officially part of the program.

[16] One-on-one mentors (both BBBS and non-BBBS) participating in our mentor survey reported meeting with their mentees about 9 hours a month.

Table 5
Group Characteristics: Youth in Groups

Proportion of youth in group with specified characteristics	Teen parent/ pregnant	Juvenile offender	Held back in school	Trouble in school	From single-parent home	Live in poverty	Good with people
None	84%	67%	53%	21%	13%	33%	3%
A few	13%	16%	36%	47%	27%	30%	19%
About half	1%	4%	6%	14%	28%	10%	25%
Most	1%	2%	2%	8%	22%	17%	30%
All	—	12%	3%	10%	10%	11%	23%
Sample size*	151	243	215	258	215	219	274

* The total sample size is 291. Sample sizes shown under each category are smaller than 291 because of missing cases.
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of missing cases and rounding.
Source: Mentor Survey.

Table 6
Group Meeting Location

Meeting location	Percentage of mentors reporting
School	56%
Community center/youth organization	13%
Mentoring program office	12%
Church	3%
Mentor or youth's home	2%
Mentor's work	1%
Other location	12%
Sample size: 270	

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of missing cases and rounding.
Source: Mentor Survey.

this study support these findings: YouthFriends estimates the cost of each group and one-on-one volunteer at about $334; TEAMWORKS estimates the cost of serving one youth at $550; and Be-A-Friend GMP estimates the cost per youth at about $720. (See Appendix B for more details on the cost of these programs.)

Challenges of Group Mentoring

This description of the structure and activities of group matches raises important additional questions. Does this setting pose significant challenges to group mentors? If so, what are these challenges? To answer these questions, we asked mentors in the current study about challenges they faced when meeting with their groups. In this section, we discuss their responses.

Equal time for group members. Although most groups are fairly small, mentors reported having difficulty providing all youth in the group with equal time and attention. In fact, this was one of the most frequently reported challenges. Eleven mentors discussed ways in which serving youth in a group may detract attention from individual youth. Without skillful facilitation from the mentor, more vocal youth can overshadow quiet youth. Mentors from TEAMWORKS, who lead groups that are larger than those in the other programs, mentioned this challenge most frequently, as seen in the comments of one TEAMWORKS mentor:

> *There were a couple of kids who were really quiet, and we'd really have to prod them to engage them in whatever we were doing. And there were three*

Table 7
Hours Spent Meeting per Month

Time spent meeting	Percentage of mentors reporting
Less than 4 hours	20%
4 to 11 hours	36%
12 to 20 hours	16%
More than 20 hours	27%

Sample size: 283

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of missing cases and rounding.
Source: Mentor Survey.

Table 8
Activities in Mentoring Groups

Activity	Percentage of mentors reporting**
Academics or homework	41%
Social (e.g., having lunch)	32%
Talking through problems	31%
Activities with other mentoring groups	29%
Hanging out	21%
Library, museum, play or sporting event	15%
Job shadowing	14%
Playing sports	13%
Exploring careers	11%
Community service activities	11%
College research or applications	2%

Sample size*: 291

* Sample sizes for the categories, "Library, museum, play or sporting event" and "Exploring careers" were 289 and 290, respectively.
** Percentages are based on the number of mentors reporting that they spend "a lot" of time with their group engaging in each activity.
Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because mentors could respond that they engage frequently in more than one activity.
Source: Mentor Survey.

> *girls who were really overbearing, and sometimes they'd end up running the show. I just wonder if the other kids ever felt left out. I don't know, it's like their voices weren't really ever heard.*
> [Mentor; Group 17]

Attitude and behavior challenges. Another common difficulty for group mentors in all three programs was managing attitude and behavioral challenges by one or more youth. Eleven mentors reported facing this challenge in their group. Working with youth who need extra attention can be difficult. This challenge is especially salient in groups because youth can be influenced by the negative behaviors of their peers. Even the attitudes and disposition of group members seem to be influenced by other youth in the group. A mentor of a middle-school group explains how this can happen:

> *Sometimes the sessions are dry and the kids are preoccupied. Obviously, something's going on at home, maybe, or something's going on with their life that's not allowing them to come to the session with a clear open mind. And when one kid tends to get down, the other kids tend to go down. It just becomes a very [negative] experience.*
> [Mentor; Group 15]

Youth's negative behaviors may also affect their peers more directly when they fight, tease or try to exclude someone from the group. Only five mentors mentioned these kinds of incidents, and when they did occur, mentors quickly intervened. But these incidents took time away from group activities, and mentors felt that the youth who were not involved may have felt excluded and ultimately received less attention from their mentor.

In addition, several mentors noted that in a group setting it is hard to give youth with behavioral problems the extra attention they need. Nine mentors said that one-on-one meetings were more conducive to this kind of attention, as seen in one mentor's description of a youth in his group:

> *He's different alone than in the groups. That's one of the boys I strongly suggest would be good*

one on one, [and] would benefit better than [he does in] the groups.

Q: How is he different?

He reacts angrily, flies off the handle…I haven't [met] with him one on one a lot, but within the group he can be tough to control. And it's tough in the group if one kid is flying off the handle because you've got four or five other kids sitting there while you're dealing with this problem. And that puts us in a tough situation.

[Mentor; Groups 20-24]

Maintaining youth's interest. About a quarter of the mentors we interviewed—most from groups with structured activities—said that getting youth focused, motivated and excited about group activities is difficult. Although group mentors have some freedom in how they approach activities, many also have an agenda to adhere to and, consequently, limited flexibility in their choice of activities and in the extent to which they can incorporate youth's requests. It can be difficult to operate under these constraints, particularly when working with youth with short attention spans. A mentor from Be-A-Friend GMP who works with older adolescent girls described her mentees' responses to a workshop on babysitting:

I don't know why they hated it. A lot of them have younger siblings or cousins. So I really tried to keep them motivated. One girl had her head down, almost fell asleep. It was tough…I think it was the activity. They're not motivated to do a lot of things, like different activities with the group. They really like to ride around mostly and do things that they want to do—anything educational, they don't like.

[Mentor; Group 34]

Choosing engaging, inexpensive activities. Finally, group mentors also found it difficult to pursue interesting, inexpensive activities because of the variety of opinions and interests that youth bring to the group and the cost of accommodating multiple youth. Keeping costs low was particularly challenging in the Be-A-Friend GMP community-based program because of the need to coordinate and pay for transportation of group members who live in different neighborhoods. In fact, Be-A-Friend GMP's program director reported that transportation and its associated costs was the single biggest challenge facing the program.

Summary

Volunteers in group matches differ from those in one-on-one matches in gender, age, ethnicity, educational level, employment status and income, suggesting that group programs are attracting underutilized volunteer populations. Discussions with our small sample of group mentors further indicate that aspects of the group format may help group programs attract these mentors and that many group mentors probably would not have volunteered in traditional one-on-one programs. Group programs are also more likely than traditional programs to target youth from minority groups. They also serve more African-American youth. Interviews with youth from the three study sites further suggest that aspects of the group environment (i.e., location in schools and peer recruitment) may help group programs recruit and serve youth who might have been overlooked by more traditional recruitment techniques.

We also found that mentoring groups vary greatly in size, amount of time spent together, activities engaged in, and mentor-youth match characteristics. Groups serve an average of 10 youth, and more than half of group mentors work with at least one other mentor on a team. Groups commonly meet in schools and engage in both structured and unstructured activities. Groups also have diverse participants as evidenced by a large number of cross-gender and cross-race matches and by the various needs youth bring to the group.

Mentors in the current study reported several challenges associated with mentoring groups of youth. Most of these challenges focused on facilitating and managing peer interactions. Group mentors must try to prevent vocal youth from dominating more inhibited youth. They must also try to maintain youth's interest and participation while managing attitude and behavior problems and preventing youth from influencing each other negatively. Transportation and cost are also concerns for group programs, particularly those that are not based in a specific place.

Mentor-Youth Relationships in the Group Setting

At the heart of the traditional one-on-one mentoring model is the mentor-youth relationship. Research shows that, when run well, traditional programs facilitate the development of strong mentoring relationships that are significant to both youth and mentor (Morrow and Styles, 1995). Research further suggests that mentors who are able to develop close, supportive relationships with youth are able to make the most positive changes in youth's lives (Grossman and Johnson, 1999).

Studies of traditional mentoring programs also point to several factors that foster strong relationships. For example, research suggests that engaging in friendship-oriented social activities like playing sports, talking or having lunch together helps mentors develop close, supportive bonds with youth (Herrera et al., 2000; McClanahan, 1998). Mentors' goals are also important: mentors who focus on relationship development as a central goal are more likely to develop strong, long-lasting relationships with youth than mentors who lack this focus (Morrow and Styles, 1995). Other research suggests that the mentor's approach may also be critical. Mentors who respect youth's opinions, have fun with youth, try to be a friend rather than an authority figure, and involve youth in decision-making are more successful at building trust and creating long-lasting relationships with youth than are those who do not (Herrera et al., 2000; Network Training and Research Group, 1996; Sipe, 1996; Morrow and Styles, 1995; Styles and Morrow, 1992).

While research on one-on-one mentoring provides a solid base for understanding relationships in traditional matches, we know little about the nature of mentoring relationships in the group context. Several important questions need to be addressed. Do group mentors want to be friends and confidantes to individual youth in the group? Is this their central goal? What kind of mentoring relationships develop in groups? Does the quality of relationships vary for different youth in the group? What factors are important in establishing close, supportive, group-based relationships? Is this relationship as central to youth's group mentoring experiences as it is in one-on-one settings?

In this chapter, we use our interviews with mentors and youth from the three study sites to provide some preliminary insights into these issues. In the first section of the chapter, we discuss mentor goals. In the second, we present mentor and youth reports about the quality of their relationships. In the third section, we describe several factors related to the development of strong mentor-youth relationships in this sample and discuss how these factors played out in the groups we heard about.

Mentor Goals

We asked mentors participating in our in-depth interviews how much they agreed that, as mentors, they tried to achieve six different goals (see Table 9). Very few group mentors had central goals of helping youth improve academically or providing them with discipline and structure—goals that past research suggests may not be conducive to the development of strong relationships (Morrow and Styles, 1995). Furthermore, over half of the respondents strongly agreed that being a confidante for youth was a central goal for them. However, it was not their most important goal. Facilitating positive peer interactions and teaching youth behavioral skills were mentioned consistently across programs as more central goals.

These findings suggest that while many group mentors do hope to create relationships with youth, their interactions may focus more on helping their mentees get along with others. This may be particularly true in programs that are designed specifically around the group concept, as is TEAMWORKS. Although building strong mentoring relationships with youth is a focus of this program, its main emphasis is team building and fostering positive *peer* interactions. This tendency to emphasize peer interactions more than mentor-youth relationship development has potential drawbacks and benefits. It could limit the extent to which group mentors try to cultivate the mentor-youth relationship and the extent to which these relationships ultimately develop. At the same time, this focus may also improve youth's ability to interact and work with their peers. This potential benefit is examined in more detail in chapter IV.

Table 9
Mentor Goals for Youth

Mentor goals	Be-A-Friend GMP	TEAMWORKS	YouthFriends	Totals
Facilitate positive peer interactions	4	10	4	18
Teach youth behavioral skills	4	8	4	16
Be a confidante for youth	4	5	3	12
Offer new experiences and give youth a chance to have fun	3	7	2	12
Provide discipline and structure	2	3	2	7
Teach youth academic skills	0	3	3	6
Sample size	4	10	5	19

Note: Mentor totals are based on the number of mentors who strongly agree that they attempt to attain each goal.

The Quality of Group Mentoring Relationships

What kind of mentoring relationships develop in the group context? In our discussions with both youth and mentors, we found that mentoring relationships can develop in the group setting, but the quality and intensity of these relationships vary greatly. The vast majority of group mentors in this study felt at least somewhat close to their mentees, yet most expressed moderate as opposed to intense feelings of closeness toward the youth in their groups. Thirteen of nineteen mentors reported feeling "somewhat close," while only five reported feeling "very close" to their mentees.[17] These reports are considerably lower than reports by community-based one-on-one mentors (Herrera et al., 2000). In this national study, almost half (45%) of traditional mentors reported feeling "very close" to their mentees.

Youth also felt fairly close to their mentors, although again fewer reported intense as opposed to moderate feelings of closeness. Only 21 percent reported feeling "very close" while a little more than half (57%) reported feeling "somewhat close" to their mentors. Twelve percent reported feeling "not very close," and none reported feeling "not at all close" to these adults.

We also asked youth a series of questions about their perceptions of the mentor's feelings for them—the extent to which the mentor cares about, has enough time for and enjoys spending time with them. Again, most youth (59%) felt these qualities were "sort of true" while only about a third (35%) felt they were "very true" of their mentors. Only 6 percent felt these qualities were "not very" or "not at all" true of their mentors. These findings again suggest that although many close relationships do develop in the context of these groups, a majority are only moderately intense.

Most youth did, however, feel that their relationships with their mentors were friendship based. When asked whether they saw their mentors more as teachers, friends, parents or counselors, most youth (79%) said they saw them as friends. Mentors across all three programs also defined themselves mainly as friends, with 15 of 19 mentors saying that they saw themselves in this role. However, mentors also saw themselves in other roles (over half reported filling more than one role): eight mentors saw themselves as counselors, five as teachers and four as parents. All five mentors who viewed themselves as teachers were from TEAMWORKS. (Three were, in fact, teachers.) Responses of "parent" and "counselor" were spread fairly evenly across the three programs.

[17] Data for this variable are missing for one mentor.

Thus, interviews with mentors and youth reveal that feelings of moderate closeness and friendship have developed in most of the groups we interviewed. While most mentors try to be friends to youth, and the youth view them as friends, these relationships may not mirror the kind of intense mentor-youth relationships that are known to develop in traditional programs. But what is the nature of these group relationships? What kind of interactions do youth have with their group mentors?

Do youth confide in mentors in the group setting? To understand more about the nature of mentoring relationships in the group setting, we asked mentors and youth about their discussions and the extent to which youth felt comfortable confiding personal issues to their mentor. Over half of the group mentors in this study reported that youth sometimes confide in them, and close to half reported that youth's personal issues or problems were among the most frequently discussed topics (see Table 10). However, less than a third reported that youth confide in them "a lot." And although many youth reported talking comfortably with their mentors, the number reporting at least sometimes talking to their mentor about positive events in their lives (87%) was much higher than the number reporting talking about things that worried, scared or angered them (49%). This suggests that only about half of these youth rely on their mentors as confidantes with whom they can discuss significant events—both positive and negative—in their lives. Again, these reports are in line with mentor's goals; being a confidante to youth was a central goal for less than two-thirds of the mentors in this study.

It is important to note, however, that close to half of the mentors we interviewed mentioned specific instances in which at least one youth in their group confided very personal issues to them. Topics ranged from living with an addicted parent to a death or a stressed family or peer relationship. Mentors from TEAMWORKS, which has a structure and activities built around discussion, mentioned this type of conversation most frequently. Three YouthFriends and two Be-A-Friend GMP mentors also cited examples of more in-depth discussions. However, these conversations were not the central focus of most of the groups we interviewed and did not seem to occur within the groups very often. When they did occur, they were often outside of the group, during more informal, one-on-one meetings, suggesting that some youth may be reluctant to discuss more personal issues within the larger group and that it may be important for group mentors to make themselves available for one-on-one discussions.

Table 10
Most Frequently Discussed Topics

Topics	Number of mentors reporting
Youth's personal issues or problems	8
How things are going in school	8
Fun things mentor would like to do with youth	6
Ways youth could improve their behavior or attitude	6
Youth's family or friends	5
How things are going in mentor's life	1

Sample size: 19

Note: Mentor totals are based on the number of mentors reporting that the topic is one of the two they discuss most frequently.

Does the quality of the mentoring relationship differ for different group members? We also wanted to know the extent to which mentors share relationships of similar quality with different youth in their group. It seems natural that mentors might establish closer bonds with some youth than with others. However, the mentor's efforts to treat all youth equally may be important in making each youth feel valued and integrated into the group.

Most mentors indicated that they did, in fact, feel closer to some youth in their groups than to others—often because they had been with them in the groups for a longer period, had worked with them in more than one context (e.g., also taught them in class) or simply "clicked" better with them. Sixty-one percent of youth also sensed that some youth in their groups got along better with their mentors than others. Yet this impression did not translate into youth feeling that mentors actually treated specific youth better or worse than others. Youth did tell us about a few isolated cases of differential treat-

ment by mentors (which, understandably, bothered them), but the vast majority (92%) felt their mentors were "not at all like" a mentor who treats some kids in his group better than others.

Youth also felt closer to some mentors than to others. Only youth in TEAMWORKS had more than one mentor, but most had little difficulty picking out the mentor to whom they felt closest. They also had clear reasons for their choice. Similar to reports by mentors, their preferences often centered on how long they had known the mentor or which mentor "knew them the best," suggesting that longer-term relationships were more significant to these youth.

Figure 1
Factors Associated with Close Mentor-Youth Relationships

Youth who feel closer to their mentor report:

- More youth-based decision-making in their groups*
- Perceiving their mentor as more fun**
- Having more personal discussions with their mentor**
- Being involved in the program longer**

* Correlation is significant at $p<.01$.
** Correlation is significant at $p\leq.001$.

Factors Associated with Strong Mentor-Youth Relationships

Although the small number of participants in this study precludes in-depth quantitative analyses of the development of the mentor-youth relationship, our interviews did suggest several key factors that may promote strong mentor-youth relationships in the group setting. We discuss each factor in turn, first, describing how it relates to relationship development in our sample and, second, discussing how the factor played out in the groups we heard about.

Decision-making. Similar to findings by Morrow and Styles (1995) in their study of relationship development in traditional matches, we found that allowing youth to have input into decision-making may foster strong mentor-youth relationships within the group setting. Youth who reported that their mentors consider their interests and consult them about decisions felt closer to their mentors than those who reported less decision-making power within the group (see Figure 1).

Past research on traditional mentoring has often examined youth input and decision-making in terms of the amount of choice young people have about their activities. Youth who participate in group mentoring can also play a role in choosing activities. However, because mentors must consider the needs of several youth and because most of the groups we met with had some predefined structure or focus, mentors often had limited leeway in the amount of choice they could offer youth. Given this structure, how do youth contribute to decisions in a group setting, and how often are youth given these opportunities?

Reflecting the predefined structure of these groups, 16 of the 19 mentors we interviewed said that the program dictates to some extent what the group does. Despite this structure, however, only two mentors said they "never" engage in activities suggested by youth (both were from very structured groups with preset activities); over half said they "occasionally" engage in activities that youth suggest; and one quarter said they engage in such activities "fairly often." Only one mentor reported engaging in activities that youth suggest "very often." This mentor had been meeting with the two girls in her group for several years inside and outside of the school context and had a great deal of flexibility in how she structured her time with them. Other mentors who worked with a specific teacher, used a curriculum or followed a set schedule of activities had less flexibility.

About half the youth confirmed mentors' reports that, even within the structure of the group, they are given opportunities for input and decision-making. Forty-three percent of the youth we interviewed reported that they decide what the group does jointly with their mentors, and 12 percent reported that it is mainly the youth who decide what to do. However, 19 percent said that it is mainly the mentor who decides, and 28 percent reported that someone else (for example, program staff or a teacher) chooses their activities.

Yet in most groups—even those in which activities were dictated by someone outside of the group—mentors did try to incorporate youth's interests into their activities. Several mentioned giving youth a menu of possible activities to choose from. Fifteen mentors also cited instances in which, even with a set curriculum, they adapted or modified an activity, conversation topic or plan to accommodate youth's interests or needs.

Mentors also tried to make group conversations youth centered both in youth's relative contribution to these discussions and in their focus. About three-quarters of youth reported that it was they, not their mentors, who talked the most in the group (only two reported that their mentor talked the most), and all but two of these youth were happy with this pattern. Eleven mentors also mentioned that the topic of conversation was often chosen either directly by youth or by the adult, keeping in mind what would be interesting to them. As indicated in the following report from a mentor, youth could also steer conversations into new directions:

> *There were a couple of times where we put the curriculum aside and discussed whatever was on their mind, especially if they initiated it themselves. [We might ask], "Does anyone have to go home early today?" and someone might make a comment about how they got in trouble with their parents, so we'll start talking about that.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 12]

Yet even considering these strategies, the decision-making process in a group is simply more complicated than that for traditional matches because mentors have more than one youth to consider. To resolve competing interests, mentors sometimes use voting to make group decisions. Two mentors also mentioned creative strategies they used to engage youth who were not interested in a particular activity. As one mentor described:

> *You can always assign somebody who's not too into [for example] getting up in a circle and locking arms, whatever it might be—you can maybe get that person to be the observer, so you give them some kind of responsibility outside of the group [to keep them feeling integrated].*
>
> [Mentor; Group 8]

Peer contributions. The quality of peer relationships in the group was not associated with the quality of the mentor-youth relationship: youth who had strong relationships with their mentors did not necessarily have strong relationships with other group members. However, mentors did mention several ways in which the presence of peers seemed to affect their relationships with youth. Over half the mentors we interviewed said that seeing youth in a group setting helped them learn more about youth than would have been possible in a one-on-one setting. The group setting gave mentors insight into youth's interpersonal behavior and social skills. A few mentors and youth also mentioned instances in which peers provided direct information about other youth in the group. For example, one youth told us that he had asked his mentor to talk to another youth in the group to "help him get his life straightened out."

The presence of peers may also help spark conversations and encourage youth to discuss shared experiences and concerns. As one mentor explained:

> *I think [the youth] feel more comfortable in a group. So actually I think the group setting might spur them on to talk about common issues. It seems like when one of them talks about doing bad on a test, they all tell me what they've been doing on their grades. So I don't have to pull it out of them. Where, one on one, generally, I have to ask them questions or talk about the things that are of interest to them before they want to share. In the group, it's kind of like one-upmanship sometimes.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 6]

Thus, while we did not find evidence suggesting that peer group members directly affect the quality of the mentor-youth relationship, it appears that group processes are one route through which mentors learn about youth's needs and interests. By serving this function, these processes may foster the development of mentor-youth relationships and even hasten their formation. The information gleaned from these processes may also support the mentor's efforts to help individual youth based on their specific needs.

Meetings: attendance, frequency and duration. Just as providing a consistent and stable presence for youth is important for one-on-one relationships, it is also a key ingredient in successful group mentoring. For groups to be effective, youth must feel that mentors are invested and engaged in the group and in them. Mentors and youth discussed consistency in the groups in terms of how often participants attended the group and in terms of the duration of the relationship and of each group meeting.

Attendance. Youth from several groups said they were disappointed when mentors missed meetings or felt hurt when a mentor hinted at a preference to be elsewhere. Although most of the mentors we interviewed attended their groups consistently (only three had missed more than one of the last four meetings), the few who were unable to make it to most of their meetings felt that their relationships with youth had suffered.

Attendance issues were particularly prominent in TEAMWORKS, where college students play a key role in the mentor teams. The college mentors were clearly important and appreciated in their groups: several mentors said their younger age made them good role models for youth and helped them relate well to youth in the group. However, similar to findings in P/PV's study of six Campus Partners in Learning programs (Tierney and Branch, 1992), the college mentors in this study were often unable to attend group sessions because of their academic schedules. These absences did not cause insurmountable problems because other team members could easily fill in. Yet a couple of the college students said they felt less close to the youth in their group because of these scheduling constraints. Youth similarly felt closer to those mentors who were a constant presence in the group.

Five mentors also talked about the adverse effect that sporadic youth attendance or the addition or removal of a youth can have on group formation and identity. The Be-A-Friend GMP program frequently faces this problem because many youth are matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister and are subsequently removed from the group and replaced by another participant. One mentor from this program told us that he had already lost 10 youth from his groups this year.

Meeting frequency and duration. As noted in chapter II, most of the youth we interviewed met with their mentors every week or two. All four youth meeting with their mentors more than once a week were from "fluid" groups with membership that changed from meeting to meeting. In these two groups, the mentors sometimes visited the youth's classroom more than once a week.

We did not find that meeting frequency was associated with youth-reported closeness.[18] However, most youth (63%) preferred more frequent meetings. Thirty-seven percent wanted their meeting frequency to stay the same, and none preferred less frequent meetings. This was true whether youth met with their group weekly (68%) or every other week (63%). Although many mentors felt that their schedules did not allow for more frequent meetings, about half of them wanted to meet more often with youth; others preferred their current meeting frequency. Only one mentor preferred less frequent meetings. Again, these responses were similar for mentors who met with their groups every other week and those who met weekly.

Most mentors (13) reported one- to two-hour meetings with the youth in their group. Four (all from Be-A-Friend GMP) reported longer meetings, and only two mentors reported group meetings of less than an hour (both were from academically focused groups). Three mentors mentioned wanting longer meetings with youth. One of these mentors is only able to meet with the two youth in his group for 20 minutes every week because of scheduling difficulties at the students' middle school. The mentor felt that this brief amount of time keeps conversations at a superficial level, preventing him from developing strong bonds with the youth.

Relationship duration. The duration of the youth's involvement in the program was also important in determining how close youth felt to their mentors. Almost half the youth we interviewed had been involved in their program for two years or more. (All of the 15 youth who had met with their group

[18] A correlation conducted between meeting frequency and closeness was not significant. Because almost all youth met every week or every other week, we also tested mean differences in closeness for these two subgroups of youth. These tests also revealed no differences between the two groups.

for less than a year were from school-based programs.)[19] Some youth had been meeting with the same mentor over the course of their involvement in the program, while others had met with different mentors.[20] Nevertheless, youth involved in the program longer, even those who had met with more than one mentor, felt closer to their current mentors (see Figure 1). These youth also reported talking more about personal issues with their mentors, perhaps because of a greater comfort level with the program and its activities, as well as with the mentors.[21]

Activities. As discussed in chapter II, activities in the three programs varied widely. Be-A-Friend GMP activities focus on community service, recreation, health and education. Mentors in TEAMWORKS use a curriculum that emphasizes team building, leadership development, cultural diversity and community service and is designed to promote social interaction and engage youth in problem solving and decision-making. Four YouthFriends groups engage in structured activities, including homework help or discussion of a specific subject area. Two other unstructured YouthFriends groups "hang out," eat lunch together or engage in other social activities.

One important question is whether focused activities like academics allow youth to develop relationships with mentors that are as close as those in other groups. Eleven of the youth we spoke with belonged to three different groups in which mentors reported an academic focus. Only two of these youth reported feeling "very close" to their mentor. Both belonged to a one-on-two group that had been meeting for several years. Their mentor discussed school frequently with them but did not limit these discussions to specific topics or assignments. He also tried to develop a relationship with his mentees that extended beyond school assignments. The other nine youth in less close relationships had been meeting with their mentors for six months or less, and the focus of their activities was primarily on completing specific assignments. Because it was those nine youth who had been meeting with their academic group for a short period who felt less close to their mentors, it is impossible to determine whether the quality of their relationships is a result of the relationships' limited duration or of the group's academic focus. Had these relationships continued, they might have become much stronger. Yet many academically focused groups are by their current nature (i.e., the mentor's association with a specific teacher) short-term, which imposes constraints on the development of these relationships.

In general, we also found that youth from academically focused groups described their mentors in slightly different terms than young people from other groups, suggesting that most of these relationships were not necessarily "close relationships in the making" but rather were qualitatively different from relationships developing in other groups. Like youth from other groups, most youth from academically focused groups reported seeing their mentors as "friends" rather than "teachers." However, in further discussions with these youth, they described their mentors as helpers, not as intimate friends or confidantes. They reported that their mentors work with them, explain things they do not understand, provide them with good information and use effective strategies to help them learn. They appreciated these qualities, but, as shown in this comment by a youth from one academically focused group, they did not often depend on or look to their mentor for other kinds of support:

> *[Our mentor] just helps us with our work. We don't really get very close to him.*
>
> [Youth 4; Group 2]

But is this lack of intimacy a result of the academic focus of these groups or simply that they emphasize an activity rather than relationships? To help answer this question, we compared responses of youth from groups with an activity but nonacademic focus with those of youth in groups that emphasize relationship

[19] Several of these youth met with mentors who were affiliated with a certain teacher. Thus, it is unclear whether these relationship will continue beyond the school year.

[20] The youth who had met with more than one mentor were from Be-A-Friend GMP (paid staff stay an average of two years; many youth stay in the program longer) and TEAMWORKS, where youth are often moved to new groups at the beginning of each school year to provide them with a more diverse experience.

[21] Duration of involvement in the program was correlated with talking about personal issues at a significance level of $p<.05$.

building. We found that youth from groups that have an activity but nonacademic focus, like Be-A-Friend GMP groups and some YouthFriends groups, described their mentors in terms of how they related to the activities. For example, youth described their mentors as having fun doing things with youth and doing "all the stuff that kids would do," as being good at or enjoying a sport that youth like and relating to youth "on their level." This orientation did not preclude close relationships: youth from these groups were just as likely to report feeling close to their mentors as were youth from other groups. But these youth simply defined their relationships in different terms than might be expected from other more intimate relationships. For example, when we asked one youth from an activity-focused group whether he would go to his mentor if he were scared, worried or upset about something, he said he would not because:

> *[My mentor] seems more like a friend than someone that you would go to for stuff like that. [I'd] go to more like a parent or something for that.*
> [Youth 2; Group 20]

In contrast, youth from nonacademic groups that focus more on mentor-youth and peer interactions and relationships, like groups from TEAMWORKS and some YouthFriends groups, described their mentors in very different terms. They said they could trust and depend on their mentors, that their mentors give good advice, are understanding, are always there for them and help them through personal problems. For example, one TEAMWORKS youth described his mentors as friends because:

> *They're not just teachers. They tell us what is wrong or right [and] tell us what to do…They're like friends, best friends.*
> [Youth 1; Group 7]

Many youth from these groups described their mentors as being good listeners, easy to talk to, and "good people," who are trustworthy, open minded and let youth say what is on their minds. The few youth in these groups who did not feel as positive toward their mentors judged them on similar dimensions (i.e., their inability to converse and relate with youth):

> *He seems more into teaching instead of talking to you—he's just there to teach.*
> [Youth 1; Group 10]

Because activities in TEAMWORKS are specifically designed to emphasize team building, they may also foster confiding and discussions of a more personal nature. Talking with the mentor about more personal issues (i.e., "friends or family" and "girls, boys and dating") is, in turn, positively associated with feelings of closeness (see Figure 1). Five of the nineteen TEAMWORKS mentors we interviewed mentioned that the TEAMWORKS curriculum and activities foster "deeper" conversations. Activities are framed around open discussion of topics such as family, peer pressure and diversity. The activities of other groups are not necessarily built on discussions and disclosure, so discussions must start without assistance from a set curriculum and, thus, may be less frequent.

Besides the activities themselves, how the mentor approaches these activities was also associated with relationship quality in this sample. Similar to findings for one-on-one relationships (Morrow and Styles, 1995), we found that mentors who are perceived as "fun" seem to make more headway in creating strong relationships with youth. Youth's reports of mentors being "fun" were positively associated with closeness and the extent to which these group members talked with their mentors about personal issues (see Figure 1).[22]

Fluid groups. In this study, the membership of all but two of the groups we heard about was stable from meeting to meeting. The other two groups were fluid. The mentors of these groups were associated with a particular teacher rather than with a specific group of youth. Because we interviewed individuals from only two fluid groups, we cannot draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of this strategy in fostering relationships between mentors and youth. All of the youth interviewed from fluid groups had also been meeting with their mentors six months or less, making it difficult to determine what the quality of these relationships would be given more time together. Yet we did note that none of the nine youth we spoke with from either

[22] Youth's perceptions of their mentor as fun was positively correlated with talking about personal issues at a significance level of $p<.01$.

of these groups felt "very close" to their mentor at the time of our interview.

One of these two groups, described earlier, was academically focused. Youth liked their mentor and appreciated his attention and academic help but were not particularly invested in him personally. Two said that they or peers felt "shy" or "nervous" around him. When another youth was asked whether she looked forward to coming to school on the days she would meet with this mentor, she said:

> *Well, it doesn't really make a difference. It's a way to get out of class, but it's not the best part of the day either.*
>
> [Youth 4; Group 2]

One youth from the second fluid group, which focused on music, could not remember the name of her mentor. When another member of this group, who had been meeting with her mentor for five months, was asked whether she confided in the mentor, she answered:

> *Sometimes I might say, "I'm in a bad mood," and she'll ask me why, and we'll talk about that for maybe five or 10 minutes. But we really don't…I guess we just don't have that kind of a bond. I talk to my aunts and uncles and people like that about stuff at home. But really I don't talk about it with [my mentor].*
>
> [Youth 1; Group 5]

Yet this youth wanted a more significant relationship with her mentor. When asked to describe an ideal mentor, she said:

> *A person I could get along with and possibly have a relationship with outside of school, other than just help me with my algebra, something besides that.*
>
> [Youth 1; Group 5]

Although it is clearly difficult to draw firm conclusions from only two groups, these findings suggest that fluid groups may not facilitate the development of strong mentor-youth relationships.

One-on-one meetings. Although meetings between mentors and youth in group mentoring programs almost always take place in the group, mentors and youth also said they talked outside of this setting. A few mentors actually met with youth individually, completely separate from the group. These mentors had either been meeting with the youth in their groups for several years (YouthFriends), had already known them before the group's formation (TEAMWORKS) or met with youth individually as an expected component of the program (Be-A-Friend GMP). But these cases were rare. Most mentors mentioned more informal, unplanned one-on-one meetings. For example, they spoke with individual youth after the group had dispersed, on the way to class, while transporting them home, or as a "sidebar" conversation while other group activities were taking place. Mentors were generally open to these more informal one-on-one meetings and, in fact, when they saw that a youth was having a problem, would pull him or her aside to discuss it.

Many youth confirmed that they do have opportunities to talk alone with their mentors, although these opportunities are not very frequent: 41 percent of youth said they talk to their mentors alone "some" or "all of the time"; 35 percent said they talk to their mentors alone "not very often"; and 24 percent said they never talk alone with their mentors. The 11 youth who said they never talk alone with their mentors are spread evenly across the three programs we visited (three are from the same academically focused YouthFriends group). Most youth (77%) were satisfied with the amount of time they spend talking alone with their mentors, although 17 percent preferred having more time alone with their mentors and six percent preferred talking alone with their mentors less often.

These occasional one-on-one meetings were one route through which group mentors were able to establish a "connection" and relationship with individual youth. As one mentor reported:

> *I always had to beg [one of the girls in the group] to come out, and now I think she wants me to beg her because she likes the attention. [She'd say,] "This is stupid. I don't want to do this." [She] would never talk, was very quiet. But slowly, I started to do one-on-one things with her in the group. I noticed she couldn't hold a golf club very well, and I worked with her, and when we played pool one time, she couldn't hold the pool stick. So I kind of try to give her some individual attention. And now she's really blossoming in the group.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 34]

In many cases, these meetings also allowed mentors and youth to discuss more sensitive or personal issues. For example, although eight mentors (six from TEAMWORKS) mentioned times when youth confided in them in the larger group, 15 mentors mentioned that personal disclosures often occurred outside of the group. Seven mentors, in fact, said that one-on-one interactions enabled (or would enable) them to have more significant, or serious, conversations with youth than they could in the larger group. One mentor even wanted to divide his group with two boys in middle school into two separate one-on-one meetings for this reason:

> *The reason why I would prefer for it to be one on one is because the two boys are friends and they go back a long way. Sometimes it seems like there's a little hesitation to open up or to tell me what's going on in their lives. All they want to do is talk to each other about the wrestling they saw on T.V. the other night or what new Sega game they just got—that kind of stuff. And that's fine sometimes, but I'd like to have the opportunity to get a little more significant conversation going.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 1]

Interestingly, this mentor did try to meet one on one with the youth in his group, but the boys were not comfortable with this setting and talked even less than they had in the group. Consequently, the mentor switched back to a group setting.

Other youth similarly preferred the group setting. We asked youth whether they would prefer an exclusively one-on-one relationship with their mentor, without the other youth in the group. The vast majority of youth (88%) said they prefer meeting with their full groups as opposed to meeting with the mentor alone (10%) or with only the youth in the group (2%). Of the four youth who preferred one-on-one meetings, two were from academically focused groups and felt they would get more significant and focused academic help meeting alone with their mentors. The other two were girls involved in the same one-on-two group; they felt extremely close to their mentor but not to each other.

Summary

In sum, we found that although most group mentors want to create relationships with the youth in their groups, their most central goals involve helping youth improve interactions with their peers and teaching youth behavioral skills. These goals may affect the extent to which group interactions focus on the development of the mentor-youth relationship. Yet they may also facilitate improvements in youth's social skills and relationships with peers.

We also found that mentoring relationships can develop between mentors and youth in the group setting; in most of the groups we spoke with, mentors and youth cared about and felt fairly close to each other. However, on average, these relationships were not as intense as those that might be expected from relationships developing in traditional, one-on-one settings. Only about a quarter of mentors felt intense rather than moderate levels of closeness with their mentees; the same pattern was found for youth's feelings toward their mentors. Reflecting the less intense nature of these relationships, only about a quarter of mentors reported that the youth in their group confide in them "a lot."

We did not find evidence for differential treatment of youth in the groups. Mentors felt varying levels of closeness with group members, but very few youth felt that their mentor treated individual youth in the group differently.

The group setting also did not seem to prevent mentors from getting to know many of the youth in their groups. In fact, the presence of peers often helped start conversations that helped mentors learn about youth's interests and needs. By doing so, peer participants may play an important role in mentors' efforts to help individual youth based on their specific needs.

Although most meetings between youth and mentors occurred in the full group, youth also had some limited opportunities to meet with their mentors alone. These meetings enabled mentors to give youth one-on-one attention and in some cases helped youth confide in the mentors about more personal issues. Despite the benefits of these meetings, the vast majority of youth did not prefer an

exclusively one-on-one relationship with their mentor. This finding supports suggestions that the opportunity to meet in the context of their peer group is important to youth and for some youth may be preferable to developing a one-on-one mentoring relationship. It also suggests that the mentor-youth relationship may not be the primary focus of youth's group mentoring experience.

Our discussions with youth and mentors also revealed several important factors that may help mentors develop close relationships with youth. Group mentors who had strong relationships with the youth in their group:

- Attended groups regularly;
- Were sensitive to youth's activity preferences and provided them with opportunities to shape activities and discussions;
- Had fun with youth and got to know them personally rather than focusing exclusively on the program's designated activities; and
- Were open to one-on-one conversations with youth when needed.

Group activities may also play an important role in fostering mentor-youth relationships. Activities involving a focus on relationship building, discussion and disclosure appear to foster fairly intimate relationships, whereas activities with an exclusively academic focus do not seem to facilitate the development of close relationships.

The Potential Benefits of Group Mentoring

Evaluations of traditional one-on-one mentoring programs have shown that mentoring improves youth's academic achievement and school attendance (Tierney and Grossman, 1995; McPartland and Nettles, 1991), and decreases substance abuse (LoSciuto et al., 1996). Mentored youth also show improvements in relationships with friends and parents (Tierney and Grossman, 1995).

Does group mentoring have the potential to lead to similarly positive outcomes? And if so, what factors and group processes foster those benefits? We saw in the last chapter that, although mentors and youth reported moderately close relationships, on average these relationships did not appear to be as close as those that might be expected from traditional, one-on-one programs. We also noted, however, that mentors saw the groups as opportunities to facilitate positive peer interactions. They also reported that they got to know youth, in part, through observations of peer interactions and discussions. This suggests that if group mentoring has effects, the processes through which they are achieved may be in many ways quite different from those in one-on-one mentoring.

In this chapter, we explore these issues by discussing what youth and mentors said about how group mentoring affected the young participants. Based on their insights, we describe some of the potential benefits of group mentoring and the group processes that may help bring them about.[23]

Does Group Mentoring Have the Potential to Improve the Lives of Youth?

We asked youth a series of questions about the extent to which their mentors had helped them in different areas. We also asked the 19 mentors participating in our in-depth interviews how many of the youth in their groups they had helped in these areas. The three categories of benefits discussed were:

- The development of social skills;
- The improvement of relationships in youth's lives; and
- Academic improvement (see Tables 11, 12 and 13).

In addition to drawing on the responses to structured questions about these benefits, we also note instances when youth (52 total) and mentors who were involved in both our in-depth interviews and focus groups (31 total) talked about specific examples of these benefits and the way they were achieved.

Social skills improvements. Research suggests that one of the most important benefits of group mentoring is improvements in youth's social skills (e.g., Van Patten and Burke, 1997). Individuals in society function as members of teams at home, in the classroom and on the job, and a youth's ability to manage these interactions successfully is an important indicator of his or her future success. For example, youth who are aggressive or are not accepted by their peers are more likely than other youth to drop out of school and engage in later criminal behavior (Parker and Asher, 1987). Social skills are also related to school performance (Wentzel, 1991) and are critical in determining whether people get and keep jobs (Holzer, 1996). Although evidence is not as strong for social withdrawal, youth who are shy may also be at risk for developing academic problems (Lambert, 1972). By providing youth with adult guidance in the context of peer interactions, group mentoring may give youth an opportunity to develop the social skills that promote success.

Our analyses support this theory. Improvements in social skills were the most frequently cited benefits of participation in group mentoring. This finding was

[23] Interview questions were constructed based on research showing the mentor's effects on positive youth development. Therefore, our "closed-ended," or forced-choice, format questions considered only how the mentor helped youth rather than focusing on the effects of other groupmates or of the group itself. It was only during our open-ended discussions with youth and mentors, as they began to articulate the benefits derived from the whole group experience, that it became apparent that youth may derive distinct benefits from the mentor, the youth in the group and the group as a whole. The interviews did not focus on these processes. Our estimated benefits of group mentoring derived from our closed-ended questions are in this way incomplete.

particularly true for respondents from Be-A-Friend GMP and TEAMWORKS, where all the mentors interviewed strongly agreed that an important goal for them was to facilitate positive peer interactions.

We asked mentors and youth about two aspects of youth's social skill development: their comfort in talking with new people and their ability to work with peers. Table 11 shows that 14 of the 19 mentors felt they had helped most or all of the youth in their group learn how to work with their peers; over two-thirds of youth felt their mentors had helped them in this way. Similarly, close to half the mentors felt they had helped most or all the youth in their group feel better about talking with people whom they do not know very well; 35 youth agreed.

Observations made by mentors and youth in our open-ended conversations with them support their responses to the structured questions. These conversations also generated more concrete examples of the social skills mentors thought they had helped youth acquire. Mentors said that over time, youth became less inhibited and shy. They also saw improvements in youth's conversational skills—their ability to listen, voice their opinions and contribute to discussions. A few mentors also reported that youth became more considerate and improved their anger- and conflict-management skills.

These discussions also suggested pathways through which youth were able to acquire reported benefits. For example, four Be-A-Friend GMP youth felt they became more comfortable interacting with others simply by being exposed to youth in their group and by being given opportunities to meet youth from other groups.

Many of these groups also seem to provide youth with safe places for self-expression. As discussed in Chapter II, instances of youth being left out or teased were rare, and when they did occur, mentors quickly intervened. Youth in well-run groups may thus develop a sense that they can contribute to discussions and activities without fear of rejection. One mentor from our YouthFriends focus group who works with a group of academically struggling youth described this process:

Table 11
Mentor- and Youth-Reported Social Skills Improvements

Social skills improvements	Mentors*	Youth**
Feel better about talking to new people	8	35
Work better with peers	14	35
Sample size	19	52

* Mentor totals are based on the number of mentors reporting that they have helped "most" or "all" of the youth in their group.
** Youth totals are based on the number of youth reporting that it is "sort of true" or "very true" that their mentor has helped them.

> *[Group mentoring] gives students an opportunity to have a safety net. Often, when they're exposed to the larger population, kids like this don't like to take risks because usually when they have, they have not been successful, or people make [negative] remarks about their comments or their thoughts. What I have noticed within this small community is that the children are working together. They're freer to take risks.*
>
> [Mentor; Focus group]

The mentor's careful facilitation of youth interactions may also foster improvements in youth's ability to interact with others. Several mentors took notice of youth's communication patterns with peers during group interactions. When these behaviors were inappropriate, mentors (and other group members) pointed out to youth how their behavior affected others in the group and worked with them to improve their communication style. One mentor described a boy in her group with a "somewhat rebellious" attitude who often spoke out and interrupted others. The mentor and other group members let him know they disapproved of his behavior. They also tried to ensure that he was always given time to express his opinion. The boy's behavior in the group improved noticeably, and his teacher indicated that his skills also transferred to the classroom, where he became much more respectful and quiet.

In two cases, mentors reported directly working with youth on anger management and seeing improvements. A third mentor talked about working with a child on his competitiveness in sports and noticing that subsequently he was starting to "fight to hold it back" instead of allowing himself to have outbursts. This child also described the behavioral issues he is struggling with and how his mentor has helped him:

> *One time we were playing a basketball game and my team was losing and I don't like losing, so when we start losing, I get mad. And [my mentor] tried to coach me and tell me, "It's just a game. Just calm down and play again."*
> [Youth 1; Group 24]

Peers may also be important in shaping youth's behavior. Six mentors mentioned ways in which the behavior of group members had a positive influence on others—for example in youth's attendance, considerateness and contributions to discussions. Five other mentors said that some youth actually help facilitate the group by correcting peers when they break group rules or mistreat fellow group members.

Improvements in youth's relationships. In addition to reporting improvements in social skills, youth and mentors also cited improvements in youth's relationships with others (see Table 12). About half the youth reported that their mentors had helped them get along better with teachers at school, and half felt their mentors had helped them improve relationships with parents or friends. Many mentors reported the same kind of benefits: about a quarter noted improvements in youth's relationships with teachers, and over half cited improvements in relationships with parents or friends.

Our discussions with youth and mentors suggest several ways that these relationships could be positively affected by group participation. Group discussions offered some youth direct advice and a constructive course of action to follow when dealing with stressed relationships. The following example given by one mentor illustrates this process:

> *One of the girls in our group was being picked on and tormented by a girl outside of the group. She was tired of it and was not going to walk away from her the next day. So we asked her, "Is that what you really want to do? How can you resolve it?" And we asked the other people in the group what they would do. Of course, the boys said, "Beat her up!" But the other girls [asked], "Do you really want to do that? Do you really want to go to the Dean's office? Do you really want your mom to know that you got into a fight?" "How can you resolve it?" was another question. She [said], "Well, I can find out why she's picking on me." That pretty much stopped the fight. And I know that they walked away not so mad at each other.*
> [Mentor; Group 7]

Table 12
Mentor- and Youth-Reported Relationship Improvements

Improvements in relationships	Mentors*	Youth**
Get along better with teachers	5	27
Get along better with parents or friends	11	25
Sample size	19	52

* Mentor totals are based on the number of mentors reporting that they have helped "most" or "all" of the youth in their group.
** Youth totals are based on the number of youth reporting that it is "sort of true" or "very true" that their mentor has helped them.

In groups that encourage youth to discuss personal experiences, three youth and four mentors (all from TEAMWORKS) mentioned instances like this in which the mentor or the entire group gave direct advice to help youth solve problems with others in their lives. Mentors and youth also gave more general advice to other group members; seven mentors, for example, talked about youth getting and giving advice to peers in the group. This advice was not necessarily "good" advice, as indicated in the above quote, but the mentor and other youth were there to ensure that the "bottom line" was constructive.

Conversations in some of these groups also provided youth with other perspectives, particularly those of their parents. For example, one young participant was having difficulties in her relationships

with her parents because she felt they did not give her enough privileges. Her group gave her advice on "where her parents were coming from." As a result, her behavior at home improved, and her parents subsequently increased her privileges.

Participation in group mentoring may also improve youth's relationships inside and outside of the group by strengthening the social and behavioral skills that contribute to the success of relationships. Seven mentors from school-based programs talked about teachers letting them know that a student's behavior had improved in the classroom. These behavioral improvements may have led to more positive interactions with the teacher and, as a result, improvements in the quality of these relationships.

Although reported much less frequently, direct interventions with parents and teachers by the mentor may also lead to improved relationships. In a couple of cases, parents asked mentors to talk to youth or work with them on a particular behavioral problem. In another case, a child felt that his teacher had acted more fairly with him since his mentor started "looking out for him." This teacher also attested to improvements in her relationships with youth in this group, particularly one that had been strained:

> *I think, [the student] finally figured out that I really wanted the best for him. We've got a great relationship now.*
>
> [Teacher]

Finally, our interviews suggest that group mentoring may improve youth's relationships with others, by widening their social circles. Over half the youth we spoke with mentioned making new friends in the group. These friendships were similar in closeness to those developed between mentors and youth: 64 percent of youth reported feeling "somewhat close" and 25 percent "very close" to the youth in their group. These friendships provided youth with important aspects of social support. We asked youth a series of questions about how many youth in their group care about them, make them feel good about themselves and listen to their personal problems. Close to one-third of youth indicated that they receive fairly high levels of peer support in their groups.[24]

Mentors may play a large role in facilitating the development of these friendships. As reported in chapter III, facilitating positive peer interactions was a primary goal for most mentors in this study. In many cases, mentors directly fostered the development of these relationships by encouraging youth to interact with their peers, intervening when youth were left out or stepping in when youth argued with other groupmates. One youth described his mentor's efforts to facilitate his interactions with other group members:

> *If I have a fight with [another youth] in the group, or somebody else, [my mentor] will talk to me about that. He'll help me be friends with him, he'll make us shake hands or something.*
>
> [Youth 2; Group 32]

These peer relationships were important to many youth and in some cases encouraged them to interact with people they might otherwise have shied away from. Three mentors and five youth mentioned this occurrence. One youth from an academically focused group was particularly articulate about this kind of attitudinal change:

> *In school you have groups, like the popular group. The two kids in my group, they're not so popular, and I used to put those kind of people down. And now, once I got to know them, I found out they're more just like me and that helped me to accept all the other ones.*
>
> [Youth 3; Group 6]

In school-based programs, relationships formed in the group often extended beyond the group itself—to the school playground or hallways. However, very close relationships that extended to other settings were usually those that already existed before youth joined the program. In the Be-A-Friend GMP community-based program, relationships rarely went beyond the group, in part because youth often live in different neighborhoods from one another.

[24] These youth scored higher than three on a four-point scale designed to measure social support from the group.

Improvements in school performance and attitudes. Although mentioned less frequently than social improvements in youth's lives, mentors and youth also cited improved school performance as a potential benefit of group mentoring (see Table 13). Close to two-thirds of interviewed youth reported that their mentors helped them get better grades in school, while about a quarter of mentors felt they had helped most or all of the youth in their groups in this way. Twenty-nine youth and seven mentors reported that mentors had helped improve youth's attitude toward school. Additionally, 14 youth (and almost half of the mentors with whom we spoke) agreed that the mentors had helped improve youth's school attendance. The relatively low proportion of youth reporting this last benefit results in part from the fact that many of the youth in this study indicated that they had consistently good attendance before their group participation, leaving little margin for improvement.

Table 13
Mentor- and Youth-Reported Academic Improvements

Academic improvements	Mentors*	Youth**
Get better grades in school	4	29
Go to school more often	8	14
Like school more	7	29
Sample size	19	52

* Mentor totals are based on the number of mentors reporting that they have helped "most" or "all" of the youth in their group.
** Youth totals are based on the number of youth reporting that it is "sort of true" or "very true" that their mentor has helped them.

Given the different focuses of the three programs involved in the study, an important question remains: did the program's setting and focus affect youth's and mentors' reports of these academic benefits? A majority of mentors from only one of the three programs, YouthFriends, reported having academic improvement as a central goal. Over half the YouthFriends mentors whom we interviewed strongly agreed that teaching youth academic skills was a central goal for them as mentors compared with about a third of mentors from TEAMWORKS and no mentors from Be-A-Friend GMP.

Reflecting these differences, youth from the two school-based programs, YouthFriends and TEAMWORKS, reported more academic benefits than did youth from the Be-A-Friend GMP community-based program (see Table 14). Differences were especially evident in reported improvements in grades and school attitude.

Analyses also revealed differences between the two school-based programs. Youth from TEAMWORKS and YouthFriends reported improvements in attendance and in liking school with similar frequency, but YouthFriends participants reported bigger improvements in grades.[25] This difference may result from the academic focus of two of the YouthFriends groups (involving nine youth in our sample).

Our small sample of mentors did not allow us to make similar statistical comparisons between responses by school-based and community-based mentors. However, none of the mentors from the Be-A-Friend GMP program reported seeing academic improvements in most or all of the youth in their groups, while more than half of the mentors from the two school-based programs reported improvements in youth's attendance and close to half reported helping youth like school more. These differences may stem from the different focus and activities of the programs but may also result from the fact that school-based mentors may simply know more about youth's school behavior than community-based mentors because they have immediate access to teachers and other school officials.

Also reflecting these program distinctions, in our open-ended discussions, mentors and youth from YouthFriends were particularly likely to discuss improvements in academic attitudes, behavior, and performance and routes through which these academic benefits were achieved. In many cases, especially in academically focused groups, mentors gave youth direct help with completing homework or

[25] Mean responses for these groups of youth were significantly different ($p<.05$).

Table 14
Mentor- and Youth-Reported Academic Improvements in School-Based and Community-Based Programs

	Mentors**		Youth***	
Academic improvements	**School-based**	**Community-based**	**School-based**	**Community-based**
Get better grades in school	4	0	20*	9
Go to school more often	8	0	12†	2
Like school more	7	0	21*	8
Sample size	15	4	33	19

† Difference between means for youth in school-based and community-based programs is significant at p<.10.
* Difference between means for youth in school-based and community-based programs is significant at p<.05.
** Mentor totals are based on the number of mentors reporting that they have helped "most" or "all" of the youth in their group.
*** Youth totals are based on the number of youth reporting that it is "sort of true" or "very true" that their mentor has helped them.

class projects. Eight youth (six from YouthFriends) cited examples of this kind of assistance. As illustrated by one youth's comment, group members appreciated this individual attention:

> *[My mentor] helps you understand it…I had a whole page messed up and he didn't just tell me, "Go do it over again," he sat down and helped me with it. He took the time out of the other kids' time and helped me with my long report.*
> [Youth 2; Group 2]

Although much less common, a few youth and one mentor from nonacademic groups also cited instances when the mentor took time out from the group's activity to help youth with a difficult assignment.

Youth from academically focused groups also gave and received academic help from their peers. Ten youth mentioned peer academic help. (All but one were from academically focused groups.) Youth enjoyed helping others in this way. When asked what she liked about meeting with her mentor at school, one youth said:

> *Not only does he help us with our work, but we can help each other. And then when we get back to class, we understand it and we can help other people.*
> [Youth 4; Group 2]

Mentors and other groupmates not only helped youth complete specific assignments, but in many cases they also assisted them in learning techniques that carried over to other academic work. Six youth, all from YouthFriends, talked about learning "tricks" that help with spelling, how to relax when playing a musical instrument or new memorization techniques. One youth noted:

> *[My mentor] explains [school work] where it seems easy…And then I take those tactics that he gives us into the classroom and I [feel] like, "Yeah, it's easy!" So my grades came up.*
> [Youth 3; Group 6]

The mentor of this successful group, who had been involved in education for many years, was particularly skillful in engaging youth and incorporating fun into their activities. Most of the boys in his group were not very academically motivated and were all close to failing. The mentor joked with them, tried to communicate with them in terms they could relate to and approached projects in ways that they could understand and enjoy—for example, by asking them to draw pictures before describing things in writing and using songs to help with memorization. One youth described group sessions as "a really small party." Another boy talked about the resulting change in his attitude toward school:

> *I used to think school was kind of dumb and boring…And then I started meeting with [my group], and [my mentor] just made school seem like it was nothing but fun.*
>
> [Youth 2; Group 6]

Four youth also discussed how their mentors motivated and encouraged them. Mentors talked to youth about their own educational experiences and acted as role models, motivating youth to follow in their footsteps. When asked how his mentor had helped him come to enjoy school more, one youth from a nonacademic Be-A-Friend GMP group responded:

> *He just talks about his experiences in school and how he studied and stuff, and that he's going on good in life. And that if we do what he did, study and stuff, that we can do what he does.*
>
> [Youth 1; Group 28]

Another youth discussed the encouragement and boost in self-esteem he received from his mentor and the subsequent improvement in his grades:

> *That's when [my mentor] told me, "Don't listen to what [other people at school] say because they're just trying to influence you to do worse, 'cause that's what they believe that you're capable of doing." And then that's when my grades went up, because I [felt] like, "I'm gonna show these people that I can do better!"*
>
> [Youth 3; Group 6]

Other mentors mentioned talking with youth about their academic difficulties to help them get back "on the right path." In school-based programs, some teachers and parents told mentors about youth's academic difficulties and, in a few cases, asked mentors to intervene with a youth and try to determine the root of the problems when their own efforts to talk to the young person had failed.

The Mentor-Youth Relationship: A Potentially Important Factor in Fostering Benefits

Impact studies of one-on-one community-based mentoring indicate that the stronger the mentor-youth relationship, the stronger the impacts for youth (Grossman and Johnson, 1999). Similarly, for this sample, our analyses suggest that the quality of the mentor-youth relationship may be an important determinant of whether youth report certain benefits.

We used two youth-reported variables to reflect the quality of the mentor-youth relationship: first, degree of closeness with the mentors and, second, the extent to which youth talk with their mentors about personal issues. These variables were associated with all three areas of improvement discussed in this chapter. However, associations between mentor-youth relationship quality and youth-reported improvements in social skills and relationships were much stronger than were associations between relationship quality and academic improvements (see Table 15).

Youth who felt closer to their mentors were more likely to report that their mentors helped them learn how to work with peers and get along better with teachers, parents and friends. Similarly, youth who talked more with their mentors about personal issues were more likely to report that their mentors had helped them learn how to work with their peers, feel comfortable talking to new people and get along better with teachers.

Talking about personal issues was also positively associated with youth-reported improvements in grades, suggesting that groups that improve academics may have mentors who focus on relationship building along with skill building. When the mentor of the particularly successful academically focused group described earlier was asked what he felt the group would be like if it went well, he said:

> *I imagined we would spend a significant amount of time not doing work, just talking, creating a relationship with the kids. Kids that age need that. You've gotta make that connection before you can really help them. If it worked, I knew they would be sharing things with me that I probably didn't want to hear [laughs] but that I could provide some guidance on. And definitely that has come up.*
>
> [Mentor; Group 6]

All three youth in this group strongly agreed that their grades had improved as a result of their group participation. Their mentor's interest in both their personal and academic lives may have been a factor in this progress.

Table 15
Associations Between Characteristics of the Mentor-Youth Relationship and Youth-Reported Benefits

	Social skills		Relationships		Academics		
Relationship characteristics	**Talking to new people**	**Working with peers**	**Teachers**	**Parents or friends**	**Grades**	**Attendance**	**Liking school**
Closeness with mentor	ns	.31*	.41**	.31*	ns	ns	ns
Talking with mentor about personal issues	.52***	.50***	.51***	ns	.47***	ns	ns

* Correlation is significant at p<.05.
** Correlation is significant at p<.01.
*** Correlation is significant at p≤.001.
ns Correlation is not significant.

Summary

In sum, mentors and youth reported that youth receive several benefits from group participation. Participants reported improvements in youth's ability to communicate and work with others, as well as improvements in youth's relationships with teachers, parents and friends. Some mentors and youth (particularly from school-based and academically focused groups) reported academic improvements as a result of youth's group participation, although such improvements were reported less frequently than social benefits.

Both the mentor and the youth's peers seem to play crucial roles in fostering these benefits. Mentors observe, encourage and facilitate youth's interactions with peers in the group. These interactions, in turn, foster friendships in the group and help youth feel comfortable interacting with and meeting new peers. Both mentors and youth also provide participants with advice and feedback on their behavior and, in some groups, provide youth with academic help and learning strategies. Similar to results from research on traditional mentoring, we also found that close mentoring relationships seem to foster the strongest benefits.

These findings suggest that group mentoring is a process in which mentors, peers and group interactions determine the experience of participants and their potential benefits. Peer interactions provide youth with direct benefits, while adults play a crucial facilitation role in shaping these benefits. Mentors also learn about youth's needs and skill development through observing peer interactions.

Conclusions

Recent efforts to expand mentoring have resulted in several innovative ways to provide youth with mentors. The traditional one-on-one approach is the most widely used model today and has the most research support for its effectiveness. However, other models also show promise—not as substitutes for the traditional model but as complementary approaches that can serve different youth, recruit new volunteers and help the field move forward.

The goal of this study was to take a preliminary look at one of these approaches—group mentoring—to assess whether group mentoring has the potential to provide a valuable complement to the traditional approach. We addressed three questions:

- What is group mentoring?
- Can positive relationships develop between mentors and youth in the group setting?
- What are some potential benefits of group mentoring?

What is Group Mentoring?

Mentoring groups vary in size, match characteristics, the amount of time mentors and youth spend together and the kinds of activities they engage in. Groups serve an average of 10 youth, meet an average of 21 hours a month and pursue a range of both structured and unstructured activities.

The mentors who serve these groups are more likely to be members of a minority group, female, older and of lower income and educational levels than mentors in one-on-one settings. Our interviews with mentors from the three programs involved in the current study further suggest that many group mentors prefer the group format and might not have volunteered without this option. Likewise, many of the youth involved in the current study were referred to their programs through nontraditional sources such as teachers and peers. Together these data suggest that group mentoring is attracting a somewhat different group of volunteers from those involved in one-on-one mentoring; and these volunteers may be serving many youth whom more traditional programs have been less successful in reaching.

Although many group mentors were attracted to the group setting, this setting also presented them with special challenges. Many of these challenges focused on facilitating and managing peer interactions. Challenges to traditional mentors, in contrast, often focus on relationship issues, such as developing trust and communication with youth (Sipe, 1999). Together these findings suggest that successful group mentors may need different skills from those required of successful one-on-one mentors: group mentors should be familiar with group dynamics and be able to facilitate group processes.

Our evidence does not suggest, however, that these challenges precluded program accomplishments. Reports of negative youth experiences within these groups were also very rare. For example, very few youth reported differential treatment by their mentors. Reports of youth being teased or excluded by other youth were also rare, perhaps because these groups were fairly structured and interactions were carefully facilitated by the adult mentor—again, highlighting the importance of the mentor's facilitation role.

Can Positive Relationships Develop between Mentors and Youth in the Group Setting?

Although relationship goals (i.e., to be a confidante to youth) were important to most group mentors, facilitating positive peer interactions and promoting behavioral changes in youth were more central goals. Mentors' motivations for volunteering in group programs further indicate that some did not volunteer in traditional programs specifically because they did not want to be "intimately" involved in youth's lives.

This focus away from the centrality of the mentor-youth relationship is reflected in the quality of

relationships reported in this study. Our interviews indicate that the group setting can foster positive mentor-youth relationships; however, we found wide variability in their quality. Some were quite intense and significant to both mentor and youth, while others resembled more distant, casual adult-youth relationships.

The small number of very strong relationships also suggests that on average group-based relationships may not be as strong or intense as those developed in traditional, one-on-one settings. Only about a quarter of youth reported feeling "very close" to their mentors; the same was true for mentors' reports of closeness. Similarly, only about a third of youth felt that qualities indicating strong attachment were "very true" of their mentors. And only about half of the youth relied on their mentors as confidantes with whom they could discuss both positive and negative events in their lives.

Despite the fact that most youth and mentors reported moderately as opposed to intensely close relationships, some mentors were able to develop very close relationships with the youth in their group. Group mentors who maintained strong relationships with youth:

- Attended groups regularly;
- Were sensitive to youth's activity preferences and provided them with opportunities to shape activities and discussions;
- Had fun with youth and got to know them personally rather than focusing exclusively on the program's designated activities; and
- Were open to one-on-one conversations with youth when needed.

What are Some Potential Benefits of Group Mentoring?

Although this study was not intended to measure outcomes, we did analyze reports from both mentors and youth about benefits youth received from their participation. Some of these benefits were similar to those of traditional mentoring—for example, academic improvement and improvements in relationships with others. Academic improvements were most often cited by youth and mentors involved in school-based programs, particularly those from YouthFriends—a school-based effort that includes academic improvement among its goals. Mentors and youth also frequently discussed improvements in youth's social skills, such as decreased shyness and stronger conversational skills. In fact, these social-skills benefits were the most frequently reported benefits of group mentoring.

Similar to results from research on traditional mentoring, we found that close mentor-youth relationships seem to foster the strongest benefits. But this relationship was not the only route through which youth achieved benefits. Participants reported that youth also benefited from the presence of their peers. Peers provided youth with academic help, friendship and important aspects of social support. Being exposed to youth inside and outside of the group also helped some youth feel more comfortable interacting with others.

The presence of peers also benefited youth indirectly, by providing mentors with important information about youth's individual needs. Peer interactions gave mentors insight into youth's interpersonal behavior and social skills. They also helped mentors learn more about youth by sparking conversations and encouraging youth to discuss shared experiences and concerns. The group setting thus provided an interactive context for youth to practice interpersonal skills and for mentors to see and shape improvements in this behavior.

These findings challenge assumptions about the nature of group mentoring. Group mentoring does not simply consist of several distinct adult-youth relationships developing independently in the context of a larger group. Instead, it is a context in which youth are mentored by a group that consists of an adult and one or more peers. Both the adult mentor and peers seem to play crucial interactive roles in bringing about positive youth outcomes. In this way, defining group mentoring and determining its value by focusing solely on the mentor-youth relationship may underestimate the potential of this approach.

Unanswered Questions

This report suggests that group mentoring may complement the traditional approach by attracting different mentors, serving different groups of youth and potentially benefiting youth in different ways from traditional programs. Yet several important questions must be addressed if group mentoring is to grow and serve youth in ways that make a difference in their lives.

Perhaps the most important issue to explore is whether these youth- and mentor-reported benefits translate into observable effects. This study hints at some potential benefits, primarily in the areas of social skills and relationships and less extensively in academics. However, outcome studies need to be conducted before we can conclude that group mentoring programs are, in fact, effective.

Understanding more about the positive effects of group mentoring programs will be critical in determining the extent to which these programs are cost-effective. Research suggests that the annual cost per youth in group mentoring programs (about $408) is lower than annual costs per youth in one-on-one programs (about $1,030; Fountain and Arbreton, 1999). The three programs involved in this study support these findings. However, until we understand more about true observable impacts of group mentoring, we will not know the extent to which, dollar for dollar, youth in group mentoring programs receive benefits that are comparable to those yielded in one-on-one programs.

It will also be important to understand more about how group mentoring achieves the benefits it does bring about. Findings from this study suggest that the mentor-youth relationship may play an important role in yielding benefits in group matches. But peer interactions and the adult's careful facilitation of these processes were also central to group accomplishments, as were the purpose and setting of the group. Future research should clarify the extent to which these factors foster benefits and whether particular factors are related to distinct benefits. Do youth receive benefits solely from peer interactions? Are these benefits different from those gleaned from the mentor-youth relationship? Can strong peer relationships compensate for less intense mentor-youth relationships?

Determining ways to create effective group programs and developing benchmarks for these programs also remain for future work. Because many group programs are still developing, these programs should continue to refine their work with youth, by sharing strategies and learning from others that are doing promising work in the field, as are the three programs participating in this research.

This study cannot definitively answer the question, "To what extent does group mentoring provide youth with important components of mentoring?" Our findings do suggest that many mentoring groups provide young people with key elements of mentoring, such as support, guidance and friendship, and that youth may derive benefits from their participation. But the extent to which youth received these mentoring components varied widely in this study. Because current group mentoring programs and the groups they support are similarly diverse, youth's experiences in group programs nationwide are also likely to vary considerably. This variability underscores the need to outline criteria that define this mentoring model. Traditional mentoring is distinguished from more casual adult-youth interaction by factors such as regular meetings over an extended period, the provision of adult guidance and support, and the development of a trusting, caring relationship. It will be important to outline similar criteria for group mentoring that also consider other important aspects of group functioning, such as the group's focus and activities, peer interactions and the adult's efforts to facilitate these interactions.

The primary goal of the mentoring field is to ensure that youth receive developmental supports that yield positive benefits in their lives. The findings from this study support the potential of group mentoring to achieve this goal. The study also suggests that by attracting volunteers and serving youth who might not be reached by traditional programs, group mentoring has the potential to expand mentoring in ways that complement the efforts of traditional programs. But because groups vary widely in almost all dimensions, they may also vary in the extent to which they ultimately benefit youth. For this reason, it is imperative to conduct research that will confirm measurable outcomes and answer important questions that will help guide the field in its expansion.

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Appendix A

The National Mentoring Partnership Public Policy Council

The Public Policy Council is the advocacy voice of the nation's youth mentoring movement. Its mission is to ensure greater support for quality mentoring at federal, state and local levels of government and to expand the favorable attention given mentoring by the public policy community.

Leadership

Dr. Susan Weinberger, Chair
Mentor Consulting Group

Dr. Andrew Mecca, Vice Chair
California Mentor Foundation

Membership

Lynn Childs
Mentor Alabama

Ralph Forsht
America's Promise

Maggie King
Arizona Mentoring Council

Linda Stewart
Maryland Mentoring Partnership

Joyce Corlett
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Dr. Jim Kooler
Governor's Mentoring Partnership

Phillip Lovell
Camp Fire USA

Dr. Andrea Taylor
Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University

Dorothy Bowen
Civic Strategies

Eric Anderson
Colorado Mentoring!

John Vezina
Communities in Schools, Inc.

Alison Glaser
The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership

Alana Sweeny
Council on Children and Families (NY State)

Dave Van Patten
Dare Mighty Things, Inc.

Theresa Clower
Delaware Mentoring Council

Mary Salander
Everybody Wins!

Arlene McNulty
Rhode Island Mentoring Partnership

LaVerne Alexander
Girl Scouts of the USA

Leslie Airth
Governor's Mentoring Initiative (TX)

Liza McFadden
Governor's Mentoring Initiative (FL)

Linda Harrill
The North Carolina Mentoring Partnership

Melanie Reed
Iowa Mentoring Partnership

Mimi Bergere
Granite State Youth Mentors

Kara Forte
I Have a Dream Foundation

Deborah Knight-Kerr
Johns Hopkins Hospital Youth Mentoring Program

Susan Ladner
KAPOW (Kids and the Power of Work), National Child Labor Committee

Liza Bray
LA Team Mentoring, Inc.

Nancy Anderson
The Maine Mentoring Partnership

Dr. Jacqueline Rhoden-Trader
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Linda Alioto-Robinson
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Matilda Raffa Cuomo
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Shayne Schneider
Mentors Unlimited

Irv Katz
National Assembly of Health & Human Services

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National Association of Partners in Education

Dr. Jay Smink
National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University

Steve Mariotti
National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship

Dr. Nolan E. Jones
National Governors' Association

David Brown
National Youth Employment Coalition

Thomas Dortch
100 Black Men of America

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Appendix B

Methodology

Data Sources

The data used in this report are taken from three sources. In chapter II, we present analyses using data from mentor and program surveys administered by P/PV. The program survey was administered as part of a study conducted by Sipe and Roder (1999), and the mentor survey was administered as part of a study by Herrera, Sipe and McClanahan (2000). Throughout the report, we also present data collected from three sites that were visited as part of the current study. These three data sources are described in detail below.

Program Survey

P/PV, in consultation with the National Mentoring Partnership's Public Policy Council, developed interviews that were administered to program staff from 722 mentoring programs nationwide (see Sipe and Roder, 1999). These interviews focused on characteristics of mentors and youth served, program practices and infrastructure. In developing these interviews, we drew from *Elements of Effective Practice* as well as research conducted by P/PV and others on standards in mentoring.

Of the 722 mentoring programs for which interviews were conducted, 78 percent served youth only in a one-on-one format (classified as "one-on-one programs"), and 20 percent served at least some youth in a group format (classified as "group programs"). Our analyses in chapter II present comparisons of these two types of programs.

During our interviews, we asked study participants about a number of different program characteristics and practices. Following is a brief summary of the program practices focused on in the current study.

Matching. Participants were asked what percentage of matches in their program are cross race and what percentage are cross gender.

Volunteer recruitment. Program staff were also given a list of 14 different recruitment sources and asked to specify the main sources from which their program draws mentors. The sources are corporations and businesses; churches; community; university students, faculty or staff; high-school classes; friends of volunteers; professional organizations, service clubs, civic groups, and fraternities; word of mouth; newspaper ads and media; municipal and city employees; program alumnae; volunteer clearinghouse, BBBS and United Way; school teachers; and the military.

Required time commitment and meetings. We asked staff how many months they require mentors to meet with their mentees. Their responses were grouped into four categories: no requirement, less than nine months, nine to eleven months and one year or more.

We also asked program staff how frequently mentors are required to meet with their mentees. Programs were given four response options: no requirement, monthly or bimonthly, two to three times a month and weekly.

Targeted activities. Program staff were asked what types of activities youth and mentors typically engage in. Activities were classified into the following categories:

- Social (e.g., spending time bonding, talking, having lunch together);
- Recreational (e.g., sports, crafts, games);
- Academic (e.g., tutoring, homework help, math help, work on computers);
- Job- or work-related (e.g., job shadowing, visiting mentor's workplace, working on resumes);
- Community service;
- Events or field trips (e.g., camping, parties, sports events, cultural and community events);
- "Everyday" activities (e.g., joining the mentor in whatever he or she is doing, visiting the mentor's home); and
- Life-skills activities or educational or structured discussions.

Programs indicating that mentors and youth typically engage in academic, job- or work-related, community-service, life-skills or educational activities were classified as engaging in "targeted activities." Programs that mentioned any of the other activities (without indicating any of the four "targeted" activities) were classified as engaging in "nontargeted activities." Programs that indicated some combination of both targeted and nontargeted activities (e.g., "all of the above") were classified as "nontargeted."

Youth characteristics. We asked program staff whether their program targets specific populations of youth in their recruitment efforts and if so, to describe these groups; and to state the percentage of youth between the ages of five and 18 served in their program who are from the following racial or ethnic groups: African American, Hispanic, White, Asian, Native American and Other. Responses given for the question about target population were coded into 22 categories (e.g., females, drug users, low-income youth). "Minority or specific minority group" was one of these categories.

Mentor Survey

In chapter II, we also present data from a survey administered to mentors nationwide from April to November 1998. These 25-minute interviews were conducted by Response Analysis, a survey research firm. The interview sample was developed using a multi-stage sampling design. In the first stage of the selection process, we chose 145 mentoring programs from among the 722 that had completed a program survey as part of the first phase of the project (Sipe and Roder, 1999). The sample of programs was selected to ensure variation of several key program characteristics. Specifically, mentoring programs were stratified using four dimensions: one-on-one vs. group matches; level of program infrastructure (i.e., little, some, a lot); the age mix of mentors (i.e., youth only, elder only, or no age restrictions); and whether or not the program specifies the activities mentors and youth are to pursue.

The selected programs were asked to provide a list of their current mentors with contact information. We obtained this information from 98 of the selected programs. The survey firm randomly selected mentors from each program's list, contacted them and requested that they complete a telephone interview about their experiences in the mentoring program. Many of these programs submitted lists with the names and contact information of all mentors who were currently matched with youth. In those cases, Response Analysis used simple random sampling to select study participants. Other programs with large numbers of mentors randomly selected a subsample to be contacted by Response Analysis. In a few cases, programs were uncomfortable about providing names and contact information without first receiving permission from the mentors. These programs provided contact information only for mentors who agreed to participate in the survey.

Mentors were contacted by the phone interviewers or, in the case of three programs, were given 800 numbers to contact the survey firm. Interviews were conducted with 1,093 mentors—802 of whom were involved in one-on-one matches, with the rest (291) involved in group matches.

The survey administered to these individuals includes questions about mentor characteristics (e.g., age, gender, income level, ethnicity) and youth demographics; group characteristics (e.g., number of youth living in poverty, at risk for academic problems, held back in school); and how youth are matched with mentors. Details about these variables are discussed below.

Group characteristics. Volunteers in group matches were asked whether they mentor with other volunteers. Those who reported working with other mentors were asked how many they work with. Group mentors were also asked how many youth are involved in their groups. In addition, they were asked how many (i.e., "none," "a few," "about half," "most" or "all") could be characterized as:

- A teen parent or pregnant;
- A juvenile offender;
- Having trouble in school;
- A student who was held back in school;
- A youth from a one-parent family;
- Living in poverty; or
- Good with people.

Consistency of meeting place. Mentors were asked whether they meet with their groups in a consistent meeting place or in different places.

Location of meetings. Mentors were also given a list of various locations where meetings could take place and asked to specify where their groups usually meet. The location options were youth's school, mentor's place of work, church, community center or other youth-serving organization, public-housing project, mentoring program office or some other place.

Duration of meetings. Mentors were asked how many hours on average they spend with their group face to face on a monthly basis.

Activities. Mentors were also asked to think about all the time they spend with youth in the group engaging in each of the following activities:

- Working on academics or doing homework;
- Preparing college applications or researching colleges or universities;
- Job shadowing or visiting the mentor's place of work;
- Researching or exploring careers;
- Participating in community service activities, such as neighborhood cleanups;
- Engaging in social activities, such as having lunch together;
- Going to a library, museum, play or sporting event;
- Playing sports;
- Talking about personal issues or problems;
- Hanging out; and
- Engaging in activities with other mentors and youth present.

Response options were "none at all," "a little," "some" and "a lot."

Mentor characteristics. Mentors were asked about their gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, employment status, educational background and income.

Site Visits

In addition to presenting data from the larger program and mentor data sets, we also present data collected from visits to three programs that use a group mentoring model. We visited these programs in April and May 2000.

Program selection. In selecting programs to participate in the study, we targeted agencies that were doing innovative and exemplary work in the group mentoring field. To choose programs that were representative of the field as a whole, we tried to ensure that programs had characteristics that Sipe and Roder (1999) reported are typical of most group mentoring programs. The original criteria for involvement in the study required that programs:

- Be school-based;
- Match adult mentors with small groups of three or four youth;
- Be relatively mature (i.e., in operation for at least two years);
- Be fairly large;
- Work with middle-school-aged youth;
- Not be a targeted program focusing on one or two narrow topics; and
- Require at least a school-year commitment from mentors.

To locate programs that met these criteria, we used four sources: programs involved in our larger program survey; programs that are part of the National Mentoring Partnership; programs that P/PV had worked with in the past; and suggestions given to us by other mentoring programs.

Finding group mentoring programs that met all our criteria was difficult. Most programs we contacted met only two or three criteria. However, we were able to find three programs that meet most of the criteria and that also represent three distinctive program models. They are Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County, Group Mentoring Program (Be-A-Friend GMP) in Buffalo, New York; Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS Program in Los Angeles, California; and YouthFriends in Kansas City, Missouri. (See boxes on pages 54-56 for more detailed descriptions of each program.)

Data collection. We scheduled three- to five-day visits at each of the three selected programs. We asked staff from each program to arrange 45-minute face-to-face interviews with 20 older elementary- or middle-school-aged youth during our visits. We also asked staff from TEAMWORKS and YouthFriends to coordinate focus groups with several mentors.

Across the three sites, we interviewed a total of 12 program and 15 school staff members about program practices, infrastructure and program goals. We conducted focus groups with 12 mentors and in-depth semi-structured interviews with 52 youth. Following these visits, we also conducted one-hour, in-depth semi-structured phone interviews with 19 mentors (see Table B1). We spoke with at least one youth from the groups of 16 (84%) of the mentors with whom we conducted in-depth interviews; and we spoke with at least one of the mentors of 46 (88%) of the youth we interviewed. In total, we were able to interview a mentor and at least one youth from 27 groups. (Mentors from Be-A-Friend GMP worked with more than one group.) For eight additional groups, we were able to hear about the experiences of only either a mentor or a youth.

Table B.1
Study Participants

Participants	Be-A-Friend GMP	TEAMWORKS	YouthFriends	Total
Youth: In-depth interviews	19	16	17	52
Mentor: In-depth interviews	4	10	5	19
Mentor: Focus groups	0	9	3	12
Program staff	5	4	3	12
School staff	0	3	12	15

Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie County, Group Mentoring Program

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The Be-A-Friend Big Brothers Big Sisters Program of Erie County, in Buffalo, New York, operates two core programs: a one-on-one community-based program and a group mentoring program (Be-A-Friend GMP). The group mentoring program's connection with the long-standing BBBS agency means that Be-A-Friend GMP has been operating considerably longer than the other two group programs in our study, having served youth in a group format for about 24 years. Unlike most other group programs, Be-A-Friend GMP meetings are held in a variety of locations, including youth-serving organizations, parks and recreation centers.

Three paid male staff members collectively serve 24 groups—eight apiece—and one additional female staff member mentors one group. Groups are same sex, with a mentor of the same gender, and thus aside from the group mentored by the female staff member, all Be-A-Friend GMP groups are male.

Because group mentors are paid staff, screening for Be-A-Friend GMP is rigorous and includes personal interviews, written tests, personality assessments, and criminal and driving record checks. At the time of our visit, Be-A-Friend GMP mentors did not undergo formal training. However, all three full-time mentors had previous experience working with youth. Following our visit, Be-A-Friend GMP staff reported implementing a three-hour monthly mentor training program. The training focuses on group dynamics and working with youth with special needs. Mentors are asked to commit at least one year to the program, but they stay an average of two years.

The groups, which generally appear to cover a two-year age span, consist of four to five youth. Membership is fairly consistent, with roughly the same youth participating each time. However, youth do occasionally "sub" in other groups when another child is absent or when he has missed the scheduled session for his regular group and wants to make up the time. Some groups also have junior volunteers (JVs). JVs are high school students who attend sessions and participate in group activities. The JV was not a consistent group member, however, in the groups we heard about.

Most boys under the age of 16 requesting services from the larger program are initially placed in groups. When a Big Brother or Sister becomes available, a youth from Be-A-Friend GMP may be matched with the volunteer based on a careful determination of need, location, compatibility and shared interests, at which time their group participation ends. However, almost 15 percent of youth "age out" of the group program without having been assigned to an individual mentor. The age limit for participation in the groups is 16, at which point youth are eligible to become JVs.

Groups meet every other week. Mentors pick youth up from their homes for the sessions, which typically last about four to six hours. Sessions often involve social and recreational activities, such as sports, although the groups also follow a broader activity agenda, which covers community service, recreation, health and educational workshops.

Supervision in Be-A-Friend GMP is fairly intensive. Case managers make a home visit when youth are initially placed in a group and contact the family at least monthly during the first few months of participation. After that, contact is made on an as-needed basis. For example, when mentors have problems with youth, case managers may intervene with home visits to try to alleviate the difficulties. Case managers also have daily contact with mentors. In addition to support from case managers, mentors also meet with each other and other program staff every Friday to discuss issues that have arisen in their groups.

The annual cost of Be-A-Friend GMP is approximately $720 for each of the 146 youth served. While this amount is high compared with that of the other two programs in our study, it is still lower than the median annual cost per youth in one-on-one matches ($1,030) estimated by Fountain and Arbreton (1999). The fact that Be-A-Friend GMP is a community-based program (and thus may have expenses not shared by site-based programs, such as costs associated with transportation and activities) may account for this higher annual cost per youth.

Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS Program

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Los Angeles Team Mentoring, Inc.—TEAMWORKS Program (TEAMWORKS) is an after-school, school-based group mentoring program that serves middle-school youth in disadvantaged communities. The program is currently in its ninth year of operation, serving nine middle schools.

The program, which serves an average of eight groups of youth in each school, runs for 15 to 20 two-hour sessions throughout the school year. Meetings take place two to four times a month. In addition to these regularly scheduled sessions, the program also sponsors occasional half-day, on-campus Saturday activities, community-service projects and field trips scheduled throughout the academic year.

TEAMWORKS uses a structured, 20-week activity-based curriculum that focuses on team building, leadership-skills development, conflict resolution, cultural diversity and community service. It is designed to promote positive social interaction and engage youth in problem solving and decision-making.

TEAMWORKS uses a team approach to mentoring, assigning 10 to 12 youth to a group, which ideally is staffed with three mentors: a teacher from the school, a college student and a community volunteer. However, assignment of a full team is not always feasible because of the difficulty of mentor recruitment. Four of the 10 mentors we spoke with from TEAMWORKS were on a full team, while four worked in pairs and two led their groups alone.

Youth can be referred to the program by teachers, other school personnel or through self-referral. When youth are matched with a group, their age, grade level, gender and ethnicity are considered. For example, sixth and eighth graders are not placed in the same groups to avoid mixing children who may be at very different stages of development. Youth's social skills, personality and compatibility with other group members are also considered. During our study, several program staff and mentors also discussed another criterion for matching that they try to use—pairing youth who are "positive" and "negative" leaders (e.g., academically motivated youth and gang members) in groups to try to rechannel negative behavior toward more constructive activities. However, these kinds of matches were not apparent in the groups we interviewed, perhaps due to self-nominations into the program and our small, nonrandom sample.

Each participating school has a program coordinator from the TEAMWORKS staff who is responsible for supervision of youth and mentor teams at that school. The program also identifies a school coordinator/liaison at each school. This faculty member works with the program coordinator to assist in program implementation. The program and school coordinators are present at all sessions and field trips to help with set-up, supervision and facilitation of the day's activities. Teacher mentors (mentors who also teach at the school) also function as school liaisons who have direct day-to-day supervisory contact with youth participants. Ongoing support for mentors in this program is provided through 30-minute debriefing sessions after every mentoring session. At these debriefings, which are facilitated by the TEAMWORKS program coordinator, all mentors at the school meet to discuss issues in their group and share strategies.

In TEAMWORKS, the screening process for mentors includes a written application, reference check, tuberculosis test and background check (fingerprinting). Mentor training consists of one eight-hour training session and one required two-hour support workshop midway through the year. The training sessions cover the program's framework, goals and activities as well as adolescent development. Mentors are also trained in how to implement program curriculum, facilitate team formation and development, encourage positive values and build relationships of trust and confidence with program participants. Program staff also use the training session to help create mentor teams, by observing volunteers' personalities, experiences and compatibility. Ethnicity and gender of mentors are mixed within teams when possible to promote diversity.

TEAMWORKS estimates its annual cost per youth for the 1,005 youth served by the program at about $597. In-kind benefits associated with being school-based that are not included in these costs—such as the additional supervision provided by teacher mentors—may help the program cut down on expenses.

YouthFriends

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YouthFriends is a technical assistance organization based in the bistate Kansas City area that assists school districts in implementing and maintaining their school-based mentoring effort. The program has been operating for six years and is currently serving 85 school districts in Kansas, Missouri and Michigan.

YouthFriends partners with school districts by providing free-of-charge technical assistance in the areas of marketing, volunteer recruitment, training, screening, retention, matching, evaluation, risk management and volunteer tracking. For their part, the school districts hire a YouthFriends coordinator who directs all aspects of the program at the district level. In addition, each school designates a YouthFriends building liaison—a counselor, teacher or administrator—to coordinate the effort within the school. This individual is the point of contact for volunteer mentors and students.

Unlike Be-A-Friend GMP and TEAMWORKS, YouthFriends does not have predefined, structured agendas for matches. Each school district determines the structure and activities of their matches based on the needs of the students and the interests of the volunteers in their particular district. Fifty-six percent of YouthFriends matches are group-based and 44 percent are one on one. Group matches range from two youth to entire classrooms. They also vary in the frequency of meetings, the focus of group sessions, the mentor's role and the gender composition of youth in the group.

Each year, YouthFriends holds two two-day training sessions to familiarize school district staff with the YouthFriends operating model. Topics covered include protocols and policies specifically related to volunteer recruitment, training, screening, matching and risk management. In addition, YouthFriends administrative staff within each of the three state branches hold monthly technical-assistance meetings with school-district coordinators. Staff members also make monthly visits to school districts to support the district and get input on how their programs are running.

Every YouthFriends mentor attends a two-hour standardized training course that focuses on stages of youth development and the issues volunteers are likely to encounter as mentors (e.g., boundary setting, student protection and confidentiality). Some schools also provide additional training. However, extra training was uncommon in the schools we visited.

Mentors are not required to make a year-long commitment to the program, but in our sample all but one of the mentors had been volunteering for at least one school year. Most mentors meet once a week with one or more youth, but requirements for meeting frequency vary across schools. For example, we heard about some mentors who meet with a classroom of youth once a month and others who meet with their group more than once a week.

Screening of mentors is conducted by YouthFriends and consists of a face-to-face interview, a child abuse or neglect check, a motor vehicle records check and a criminal background check. Supervision of mentors and youth in groups is provided by the school's building liaison. Teachers also provide some supervision.

YouthFriends' role as an intermediary and its emphasis on volunteer recruitment and training means that the program's yearly budget is focused on the cost per volunteer, not on the cost per youth. Over the past six years of operation, YouthFriends has cumulatively involved over 10,000 mentors. The program estimates annual expenses for each of these volunteers at about $334. This amount, however, is decreasing over time because it includes start-up costs only incurred when the program was initiated. This amount does not reflect in-kind contributions of the school districts and schools (e.g., supervision, space, materials).

Mentors interviewed from the three study sites. Most of the mentors interviewed from the three study sites are male (55% vs. 45% female) (see Table B2). Mentors ranged in age from 21 to 72 years old, with an average age of 37. More than half (58%) of the mentors in our sample were between the ages of 22 and 35. A large percentage of these mentors are also members of minority groups: African Americans compose 23 percent of our sample, Hispanics 6 percent, and Asians 3 percent.

Overall, the mentors are highly educated, with 23 percent having earned a four-year degree and 26 percent holding a graduate or professional degree. Mentors were involved in a variety of occupations. Nineteen percent were teachers, 16 percent were college students, and 39 percent were professionals working in other fields. Four mentors (13%) were retired, and four were paid mentors who work full time for Be-A-Friend GMP.

Youth interviewed from the three study sites. Sixty-five percent of the youth we interviewed are male and 35 percent female (see Table B3). The disproportionate number of male mentees in our sample reflects the fact that all of the youth we interviewed from Be-A-Friend GMP are boys (boys make up the membership of all but one group in this program). More than half of the mentees interviewed are minority: 31 percent are African American, 21 percent Hispanic and 2 percent Asian.

For the interviews, we asked programs to select youth of upper-elementary and middle-school age to best reflect the ages of youth in group programs surveyed in our larger program survey. Youth interviewed in the current study range in age from 10 to 15 years old, with an average age of 13. Most (59%) are in middle school (seventh and eighth grade). Younger youth were interviewed mainly in Be-A-Friend GMP. These youth range in age from 10 to 14, with an average age of 12 years, while the ages of youth from TEAMWORKS and YouthFriends range from 12 to 15, with an average age of 13.

Most of the youth with whom we spoke are high academic achievers: 73 percent reported earning Bs or higher in school. Only four youth reported receiving poor grades (Cs and Ds or lower). Forty-two percent of the youth interviewed were from single-parent households.

Mentor and youth interviews. Interviews covered several topics, including the quality of mentor-youth relationships, potential benefits and challenges of group mentoring, decision-making, discussions, peer interactions and the mentor's goals and approach. Protocols included both open-ended and forced-choice format questions. Descriptions of the forced-choice questions that constitute measures included in this study, their response sets and reliability coefficients are presented in the boxes on pages 60 and 62.

Table B.2
Demographic, Education and Employment Characteristics of Participating Mentors

	Be-A-Friend GMP	TEAMWORKS	YouthFriends	Total
Demographic characteristics				
Gender				
Male	3	9	5	17 (55%)
Female	1	10	3	14 (45%)
Age				
Less than 22	—	2	—	2 (6%)
22–35	4	13	1	18 (58%)
36–49	—	3	4	7 (23%)
50+	—	1	3	4 (13%)
Race/Ethnicity				
White	3	11	6	20 (65%)
African American	1	4	2	7 (23%)
Hispanic	—	2	—	2 (6%)
Asian	—	1	—	1 (3%)
Other	—	1	—	1 (3%)
Education and employment characteristics				
*Education**				
Some college	1	3	—	4 (13%)
College graduate (4-year degree)	3	2	2	7 (23%)
Graduate/professional	—	5	3	8 (26%)
Occupation				
Working professional	—	7	5	12 (39%)
Teacher	—	6	—	6 (19%)
College/graduate student	—	5	—	5 (16%)
Retired	—	1	3	4 (13%)
Paid mentor	4	—	—	4 (13%)
Sample size	4	19	8	31

* This category has several missing cases because mentors in the focus groups were not asked about their educational level.

Table B.3
Demographic and Academic Characteristics of Participating Youth

	Be-A-Friend GMP	TEAMWORKS	YouthFriends	Total
Demographic characteristics				
Gender				
Male	19	7	8	34 (65%)
Female	—	9	9	18 (35%)
Age				
Less than 12	7	—	—	7 (13%)
12	5	3	7	15 (29%)
13–14	7	12	8	27 (51%)
15+	—	—	2	2 (4%)
Race/Ethnicity				
White	13	—	11	24 (46%)
African American	6	5	5	16 (31%)
Hispanic	—	11	—	11 (21%)
Asian	—	—	1	1 (2%)
Single Parent				
Yes	15	2	5	22 (42%)
No	4	12	11	27 (52%)
Academic characteristics				
Grades				
Mostly As	1	1	4	6 (12%)
Mostly As and Bs	7	7	8	22 (42%)
Mostly Bs	5	4	1	10 (19%)
Mostly Bs and Cs	2	1	1	4 (8%)
Mostly Cs	2	—	2	4 (8%)
Mostly Cs and Ds or lower	2	1	1	4 (8%)
Sample size	19	16	17	52

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 because of missing cases and rounding.

Youth Constructs with Items, Response Sets and Reliability Coefficients

Youth's perceptions of mentor's feelings (4 items, alpha = .61)

- I'd like to read you some things kids have said about their mentors. For each statement, tell me whether it is not at all true, not very true, sort of true or very true for you.
  (a) My mentor cares about what happens to me.
  (b) My mentor doesn't seem to have enough time for me *(reversed).*
  (c) My mentor likes to be with me.
  (d) My mentor has plenty of time for me.
  1 Not at all true
  2 Not very true
  3 Sort of true
  4 Very true

Decision-making (5 items, alpha = .76)
(Adapted from Grossman and Johnson, 1999)

- I'm going to read you some things kids have said about their mentors. Please listen carefully and try to think if that's at all like [NAME OF MENTOR]. I want you to tell me if [NAME OF MENTOR] is a lot like that, kind of like that, not really like that or not at all like that.
  (a) This mentor almost always asks the kids in his/her group what they want to do.
  (b) This mentor is always interested in what the kids in his/her group want to do.
  (c) This mentor thinks of fun and interesting things to do.
  (d) This mentor and the kids in his/her group like to do a lot of the same things.
  1 Not at all like that
  2 Not really like that
  3 Kind of like that
  4 A lot like that
  (e) How often does your mentor do things with the group that you really want to do?
  1 Hardly ever
  2 Not very often
  3 Sometimes
  4 Pretty often

(Single item)

- Who usually decides what you do in your group?
  1 Your mentor
  2 The youth in the group
  3 All of you together
  4 Someone else (like your teacher)

Peer support (8 items, alpha = .87)
(Scale tested with middle-school youth in a project conducted by Jacque Eccles)

- For each of the statements I'm going to read, tell me if this is true for all of the kids in your group, most of the kids in your group, some of the kids in your group, or none of the kids in your group. How many of the kids in your group…
  (a) Are really fun to be around?
  (b) Care about what happens to you?
  (c) Make you feel good about yourself?
  (d) Could you go to about personal problems?
  (e) Could you go to if you were really mad or upset about something?
  (f) Spend time with you outside of the group?
  (g) Do you trust not to repeat things you say in group?
  (h) Do you feel really close to?
  1 None
  2 Some
  3 Most
  4 All

Closeness to other youth in the group (single item)

- How close do you feel to the other kids in your group?
  1 Not close at all
  2 Not very close
  3 Somewhat close
  4 Very close

Closeness to mentor (single item)

- How close do you feel to your mentor?
  1 Not close at all
  2 Not very close
  3 Somewhat close
  4 Very close

Youth perceptions of mentor (single item)

- Would you say [NAME OF MENTOR] is a…
  1 Really boring person
  2 Kind of boring person
  3 Kind of fun person
  4 Really fun person

Mentor role (single item)

- How would you describe your mentor? Does she/he remind you most of…
  1 A teacher
  2 A friend
  3 A parent
  4 A counselor

Discussions (single items)

- When you've felt really good about something that happened to you, how often do you tell [NAME OF MENTOR] about it?
- When you've felt worried, mad or scared about something that happened to you, how often do you tell [NAME OF MENTOR] about it?
- How often do you talk to [NAME OF MENTOR] alone, without the other kids being able to hear?
  1 Never
  2 Not very often
  3 Some of the time
  4 All of the time

- Who talks the most in your group, your mentor or the kids in the group?
  1 Kids
  2 Mentor
  3 Both

- Would you rather talk alone with your mentor…
  1 More
  2 Less
  3 About the same

Talking about personal issues (2 items, alpha = .75)

- When you talk to [NAME OF MENTOR], how often do you talk about…
  (a) Your friends or family
  (b) Girls, boys or dating
    1 Never
    2 Not very often
    3 Sometimes
    4 Pretty often

Differential treatment (single item)

- I want to read you some more things about mentors. I want you to tell me if these mentors are really like [NAME OF MENTOR], kind of like, not really like or not at all like him/her.
  - Bob, a mentor, treats some kids in his group better than others. Is [NAME OF MENTOR]…
    1 Not at all like that
    2 Not really like that
    3 Kind of like that
    4 Really like that

Meeting preference (single item)

- If you could choose between meeting just with your mentor, meeting just with the other kids, and meeting with the whole group, what would you choose?
  1 Meeting just with my mentor
  2 Meeting just with the other kids in the group
  3 Meeting with the whole group

Youth-reported benefits (single items)

- For each of the following statements, can you tell me if it's not at all true, not very true, sort of true or very true for you? My mentor has helped me…
  (a) Get better grades in school.
  (b) Get along better with teachers at school.
  (c) Feel better about talking with people I don't know very well.
  (d) Learn how to get along better with my mom or dad or a friend.
  (e) Come to school more often.
  (f) Like school more.
  (g) Learn how to work with people my age.
    1 Not at all true
    2 Not very true
    3 Sort of true
    4 Very true

Mentor Constructs with Items, Response Sets and Reliability Coefficients

Closeness to youth (single item)

- Overall, how close do you feel to your mentees?
  - 1 Not close at all
  - 2 Not very close
  - 3 Somewhat close
  - 4 Very close

Mentor role (single item)

- How do you think of yourself most, when you are with your group, as a teacher, a friend, a parent or a counselor?
  - 1 Teacher
  - 2 Friend
  - 3 Parent
  - 4 Counselor

Goals (single items)

- How much do you agree that as a mentor in the program you try to…
  - (a) Be a facilitator of positive peer interactions?
  - (b) Teach youth academic skills?
  - (c) Teach youth behavioral skills?
  - (d) Be a confidante for youth?
  - (e) Give youth a chance to have fun and do things they normally wouldn't do?
  - (f) Provide discipline and structure for youth?
    - 1 Strongly disagree
    - 2 Somewhat disagree
    - 3 Somewhat agree
    - 4 Strongly agree

Confiding (single item)

- On average, how much do you feel the youth in your group confide in you?
  - 1 Not at all
  - 2 A little
  - 3 Some
  - 4 A lot

Conversation topics (single items)

- How often do you and your mentees talk about the following:
  - (a) How things are going in school (like their grades)?
  - (b) Fun things you'd like to do together?
  - (c) Ways youth could improve their behavior or attitude?
  - (d) Youth's family or friends?
  - (e) How things are going in your life?
  - (f) Youth's personal issues or problems?
    - 1 Never
    - 2 Not very often
    - 3 Sometimes
    - 4 Pretty often

Decision-making (single items)

- How often do you do activities that the youth in your group suggest?
- How often do you do activities that program staff or teachers suggest?
  - 1 Never
  - 2 Occasionally
  - 3 Fairly often
  - 4 Very often

Mentor-reported benefits (single items)

- As a mentor in this program, how many of the youth in your group do you think you have helped…
  - (a) Get better grades in school?
  - (b) Get along better with their teachers at school?
  - (c) Feel better about talking with people they don't know very well?
  - (d) Learn how to get along better with parents or friends?
  - (e) Come to school more often?
  - (f) Like school more?
  - (g) Learn how to work with their peers?
    - 1 None
    - 2 Some
    - 3 Most
    - 4 All

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