

COMMUNITY-BASED MENTORING PROGRAMS: INFLUENCE ON ADOLESCENTS'

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

According to the research, community mentoring programs can influence an adolescent's social skills, academics, and social mobility. Part of the reason for this is that community-based mentoring programs can provide training and understanding of how adolescents can address situations they may encounter. In addition, community mentoring programs can provide adolescents with access to social capital that has the potential to influence them as they begin transitioning out of school and into the workforce. This study examined how community-based mentoring programs influences an adolescent's social capital and social competence. Data collected came from three community mentoring programs, one from each region in New Jersey, where individual interviews with the program directors and focus group interviews with the adolescents of those programs occurred. The findings from this study can reinforce and add to the existing research on community mentoring programs and their influence on adolescents who enroll. Data from this research can support developing mentoring programs in communities that are culturally responsive to the needs of the population they serve. The study found that adolescents' social skills, self-awareness, decision-making, networking, and social mobility were influenced by their enrollment in the community mentoring program.

Keywords: community-based mentoring programs, adolescents, social capital, social competence, mentor

DEDICATION

This accomplishment of completing my study could not be done without the love and support of my family and close friends. I would like to dedicate this paper to the following:

To my wife Amanda, son Michael, soon-to-be daughter Nataliya, and dog Angel. Whether it was through your unconditional love or making me laugh while on Zoom calls, you helped me through this journey.

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To my colleagues, I now call friends Deirdre, Danielle, Lisa, Marta, and Laurence. We pushed each other to our limits and will now be part of the 2%.

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Community-Based Mentoring Programs: Influence on Adolescents' Social Capital and Social
Competence

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Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Over the years, mentoring has emerged as one outlet for adolescent involvement. Nonprofits represent 79% percent of youth mentoring programs, while 36% of mentoring agencies receive training and assistance from a mentor affiliate (Garringer et al., 2017). Community-based mentoring programs can improve social competence and increase social capital by introducing new connections to the enrolled adolescents (Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012). Mentoring has also been connected to adolescents having more favorable outcomes, such as academics, social mobility, social skills, and engagement in extra-curricular activities (Grant et al., 2014; King et al., 2017)

Community-based mentoring programs have the ability to support adolescents in their neighborhoods. For example, the Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Program of New Jersey aims to create and support mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth (BBBS, 2022a). This one-to-one approach can help meet the needs of adolescents by providing them with attention and guidance from an adult (Pryce & Thomas, 2012). Additionally, a mentor can come in various forms. Teachers, counselors, and peers of similar backgrounds and demographics can form connections with the adolescent, which can provide further additional guidance and support.

Community mentoring programs highlight the role of the mentor approach in the quality of the relationship built with the mentee (Pryce, 2012). Big Brothers Big Sisters, for example, has a national standard with expectations that mentors receive monthly support contacts from

program staff, which has been critical for providing high-quality mentorship (Bayer et al., 2015). By having a mentor devoted to the program, adolescent involvement can improve social and health-related outcomes (Dewit et al., 2016). Pryce (2012) provides a model with precise terminology and communication that can help foster effective quality mentorship: focus, purpose, and authorship. Focus ranges along a continuum from relational activities to more explicit, goal-driven ones, while purpose asks questions about who is being served when the mentor and mentee interact. Authorship refers to the set of negotiations that occurs regarding activities and conversation topics.

There are situations where mentoring programs had limited positive effects on the adolescents enrolled. Time dedication throughout the mentoring program can influence the effectiveness of the adolescent experiences. Estimates have shown that 30-50% of mentorship relationships only last a few months, thus limiting the connection the adolescent makes with the mentor and not fully allowing sufficient time to mature (Dewit et al., 2016). Also, mentors that only last a few months may have a limited influence on the adolescent. When a relationship is formed over an extended period between the mentor and adolescent, there is a potential to see a more significant influence on the adolescent (Pryce & Keller, 2012). Another drawback that limits the influence of community mentoring involves the pairing between the mentor and the adolescent. Adults are typically paired with adolescents who come from outside their communities, resulting in the pairing ending prematurely and not offering the assistance they need (Garringer et al., 2017; Spencer et al., 2019). Understanding how a community mentorship program influences an adolescent's social capital and competence is beneficial to serve future enrollees better.

Definitions of Terms

For this study, the following terms are defined as such:

- Adolescents: Phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19 (Organization, n.d.)
- Community-based mentoring: A program where an adult spends time with a younger person to support their needs and provide guidance outside the school setting and not directly associated with the district (Axford et al., 2021).
- Mentor: An adult who spends time with a younger person to support their development, provide friendship and guidance, and offer a different perspective on the world (BBBS, 2022b).
- Social Capital: Networks and connections between individuals that can provide support and resources (McPherson et al., 2014). A characteristic of social capital would be interconnected networks of relationships between groups.
- Social Competence: The ability to evaluate social situations and determine what is expected or required; to recognize the feelings and intentions of others; and to select social behaviors that are most appropriate for that given context (Psychology, 2023). Examples of characteristics of social competence would be responding to peer provocation, managing conflict with peers, and how the adolescent responds to difficult circumstances.

Statement of the Problem

The phenomenon studied through this research was how community-based mentoring programs influenced adolescents enrolled. The pursuit of social mobility generally refers to the

actions that support improved socioeconomic status, such as educational attainment or employment, which can be achieved through social capital (Shier et al., 2018). Community-based mentoring programs can provide the social capital to positively influence an adolescent's socioeconomic status. Additionally, community-based mentoring programs can influence an adolescent's social competence by providing training and understanding of how to address various situations they may encounter. Community-based mentoring programs can provide a haven for youths to express themselves and receive guidance when engaging in social and community activities while working with adolescents on their social and emotional skills (Rodriguez-planas, 2014).

Not all adolescents have equal access to be engaged in community mentoring programs that could influence their social capital and social competence. Issues such as the connection with a mentor terminated early increase the risk of the youth feeling hurt and confused, thus limiting the program's intended purpose (Dewit et al., 2016; Grossman et al., 2012). Additionally, the experience and pairing between the mentor and adolescent could result in different outcomes. Mentors who had preconceived expectations working with the adolescent or were not as properly trained to deal with the issues the adolescent is experiencing had a higher risk of a poorer quality relationship, which leads to lower motivation to continue staying in the program (Raposa et al., 2016).

By studying the influence community-based mentoring programs have on an adolescent's social capital and social competence, the researcher hopes to not only contribute to the existing literature on the topic but also direct adolescents to programs that will best assist them.

Purpose of the Study

With multiple community-based mentoring programs throughout New Jersey, it was beneficial to understand how community-based mentoring programs influence an adolescent's social capital and competence.

The following research question guided this research:

Research Question:

How do community-based mentoring programs influence adolescents' social capital and social competence?

Theoretical Framework

To understand the influence of community-based mentoring programs, it was worth studying Social Learning Theory and how it could influence the actions and behavior of adolescents. The basic premise of Social Learning Theory is that behavior results from both person and situation and does not result from either factor alone (Hanna et al., 2013). Social Learning Theory proposes that an individual learns behavior from observing and imitating others (Hanna et al., 2013).

Albert Bandura first discussed the idea of Social Learning Theory in 1969. He argued that moral judgments are more variable than initially thought, and exposing children to adult models who expressed the moral judgment that ran counter to what they are predominately exposed to is effective at modifying their judgmental behavior. Adolescents who are given a personality questionnaire and the description of the parents on the same or similar test are occasionally employed as an index of parental identification, meaning the child models after

their parents (Bandura, 1969). When adolescents imitate behavior, this is primarily attributed to the modeling they are exposed to. Because of the various adult figures an adolescent interacts with daily, it is complicated to identify whose actions the adolescent is modeling. Adult figures can include teachers, parents, community companions, and celebrities through television and film. Understanding this theory, whom we associate with can influence our decision-making, judgments, and behavior, making proper mentorship an important intervention to help an adolescent in need.

This theory is reinforced by Hanna et al. (2013) in their study of Social Learning Theory and how it influences ethical behavior. Their research drew data from businesses from 36 different countries and examined relationships among role models, capitalism, and laws. Their findings showed that employees were more likely to act unethically if a leader acted unethically. When leaders act ethically, then the followers act similarly.

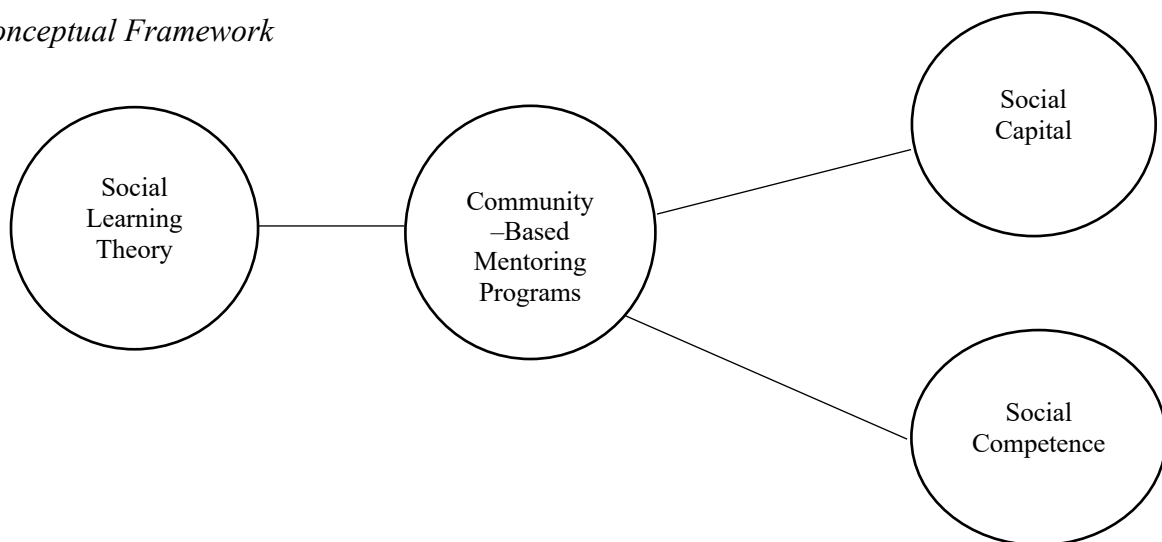
The Social Learning Theory can also be applied when studying community-based mentoring programs. Research on adolescent behaviors shows that positive or negative behaviors may be partly due to the social support, networking, and role models they are exposed to (Margaret & Meggan, 2018). Understanding this theory, adolescents are more likely to engage in delinquent acts if they associate themselves with individuals with delinquent behaviors. Additionally, adolescents can respond differently to adults based on their social roles or gender, which could influence the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Social Learning Theory is the understanding that both conforming and delinquency behavior can be learned through observation and modeling, similar to the findings above regarding employees and their behavior based on their observations by their leader. When a mentor acts as a positive role model for the adolescent, they can promote positive social capital and competence.

Mentoring relationships can also be viewed as a socialization process for the adolescent, where adolescents learn positive behaviors and attitudes from observing their mentor (Pekerti et al., 2021). Social Learning Theory emphasizes that the observer learns via modeling, which includes attentional process, retention process, motor-reproduction process, and motivational process (Ashenbrenner & Johnson, 2017). An adolescent considering their post-educational career and how it applies to their life would be an example of an attentional and retention process. Motor reproduction would find the observer reproducing the behavior. This can be a challenge for adolescents due to the various factors the adolescent went through. With the motivational process, an adolescent could demonstrate learned behavior if they receive an award, such as good grades or graduation from school (Ashenbrenner & Johnson, 2017).

By better understanding Social Learning Theory, mentors in the community mentorship program can repeat positive behavior, prompting adolescents when they fail and rewarding them when they succeed (Ashenbrenner & Johnson, 2017). Combining Social Learning Theory with the procedures in community-based mentoring programs has the potential to yield positive results for the adolescents enrolled.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework above (Fig.1) shows how viewing community-based mentoring programs through the lens of social learning theory can influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. Community-based mentoring programs may create a setting where adolescents can emulate behaviors from the mentors they are associated with. Additionally, observing positive behavior can lead to proper behavior and decision-making from the adolescent. Lastly, Social Learning Theory can be connected to social capital by showing adolescents how to network and use resources around them that can contribute to their social mobility.

Social Justice of Mentoring

Community-based mentoring programs can be an effective resource when addressing social inequalities. The role of community mentoring programs in positive youth development has been widely recognized as an important service to help adolescents (Park et al., 2016). Traditional mentorship programs pair an adult volunteer with adolescents with the goal of fostering a meaningful, supportive relationship (Albright et al., 2017). Big Brothers Big Sisters, for example, encourages youth interaction with peers, teachers, and neighbors to promote positive relationships between adults and children (Park et al., 2016). Mentoring programs often rely on the success of middle-class adults to offset risk and promote positive outcomes for socio or economically marginalized youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). This mentoring model often leads to the pairing of mentor and mentee of different races, classes, and ethnicities.

Social justice practices should be considered when utilizing community-based mentoring programs as an intervention. Social justice emphasizes equal resources, the dissolution of power hierarchies, and empowerment and wellness among marginalized groups (Albright et al., 2017).

Additionally, social justice mentoring requires one to continually reflect, change, and evaluate one's practice in an effort to create transformative spaces for people to harness their potential (Neville, 2015). Rhodes' theoretical model of youth mentoring suggests that mentoring has the potential to promote positive identity development (Dubois & Karcher, 2013; Rhodes, 2005). Marginalized youths often face discrimination, which can lower self-efficacy and undermine self-achievement (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). When mentoring programs employ social justice practices in their pairing, such as pairing youth of color with a mentor of color, the positive feeling about one's race or culture can increase (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). Park et al. (2016) reported that race could affect the quality and duration of the relationship between the mentor and adolescent.

Additionally, mentors in the community mentorship program who are of similar demographics can influence the adolescent experiences. A mentor who is more relatable and lived the effects of discrimination can be more relatable to the adolescent (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). This feeling of being able to relate can lead to a more trusting relationship between the mentor and the adolescent in the program. The mentor can assist the adolescent on how to handle discrimination or expand their self-worth in society. The mentor can also influence the adolescent's social capital and competence. Garray and Pistrang (2010) found that black male adolescents in their study felt that sharing their mentor's racial background allowed for greater mutual identification over shared experiences, such as discrimination and interests. The study also found that the adolescent felt more comfortable receiving advice from someone from a similar background. Employing culturally responsive practices can have a more significant influence on adolescents from marginalized groups.

Summary

Positive outcomes experienced by adolescents enrolled in the programs came in varying forms, such as relationships with friends and family and having a sense of belonging and acceptance by their peers (Dryburgh, et al., 2020). Through community-based mentoring programs, an adolescent had access to a mentor who could help guide and offer support where it was needed most. Chapter II reviews the existing literature and research related to community-based mentoring programs and their influence on an adolescent's social capital and social competence.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

With an estimated 2.5 million adolescents enrolled in mentoring programs yearly, mentoring has become a popular intervention in assisting adolescents with diverse issues (Raposa et al., 2019). Understanding how community-based mentoring programs influence an adolescent's social capital and competency is essential to offering proper support and guidance to those needing it most.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory is the concept that an individual learns behavior from their surroundings. In their paper, Kelley and Lee (2018) argue that social attachments within positive learning environments lead to positive outcomes. Their same study explains how the opposite can be true, where children associating with individuals of negative influence can lead to adverse outcomes. Their research examines how young people differ in delinquency outcomes based on the type of "natural mentors" they associate with. For this study, a natural mentor is defined as a social connection that emerges organically from the adolescent's social environment.

In youth, delinquency in their behavior can often be traced back to who the individual is associated with or by peer influence (Kelley & Lee, 2018). Natural mentors may help the youth during these difficult times by providing moral support and judgment and increasing self-esteem. The greater positive attachment to these natural mentors, such as churches, family, and marriage, tends to have a decrease in delinquent behavior. As in formal mentoring, natural mentoring

suggests that young people with natural mentors can see a positive increase in academic achievement, employment, psychological and physical behavior, as well as decreased behaviors (Erdem et al., 2016). By understanding the Social Learning Theory, deviant and conforming behaviors are learned through the same process of observation.

For this study, Kelley and Lee (2018) argue that natural mentoring relationships are a positive influence that shifts the individual away from delinquent behaviors. Consistent with Social Learning Theory, they hope to find that an increased attachment to natural mentors will decrease levels of delinquency. They also expect to find that specific characteristics of mentoring relationships, such as type and duration, will decrease delinquency. Lastly, the researchers expect that mattering will mediate the relationship characteristics and delinquency. For this study, mattering is defined in the field of sociology as being noticed, needed, and an object of concern, as well as the perception of being acknowledged and relevant to others (Kelley & Lee, 2018).

The study by Kelley and Lee (2018) was conducted in stages using STATA, where descriptive statistics and correlations were examined. From there, the researchers moved to Ordinary Least Squares and Poisson regression procedures. After examining the data, the ending sample size was 10,120 participants. When determining whether mentor characteristics account for lower delinquency, they found that the type of natural mentor did have an influence. For example, a natural mentor who was a coach saw a decrease in delinquent behavior. When researching how mattering mediates some relationships, the researchers found that mattering to others consistently significantly reduced delinquent and dangerous behavior.

For adolescents, poverty can harm their psychological and social well-being and contribute to their academic achievement and mental health (Winer & Thompson, 2013). In

addition, adolescents who consume alcohol are harming their cognitive development, as well as breaking the law, which could further lead to other social problems (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2013). Community is one source of support where adolescents can turn to. A community can provide a positive environment and intervention for youth and families. Mentoring programs can offer the strength and motivation to build confidence in adolescents enrolled for them to move forward in their lives (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017).

Aschenbrener and Johnson (2017) discussed how the strength perspective can be a beneficial practice in mentoring programs in helping adolescents overcome challenges they may face. The strength perspective focuses on empowering the individual to focus on their strengths to overcome barriers (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017). Social Learning Theory emphasizes observational learning, which utilizes role models to support the observer. (Aschenbrener & Johnson, 2017). Bandura (1977) explains how individuals who repeatedly demonstrate desired responses, instruct others to reproduce the behavior and prompt them when they fail may produce matching responses in most people. The researchers argue that using role models can demonstrate positive reinforcement. By modeling proper social skills, mentors can enhance adolescents' perceptions of social support and facilitate more positive connections with others (Raposa et al., 2019).

Raposa et al. (2019) examined the influence of youth mentoring using relevant outcomes studies of one-on-one youth mentoring programs written between 1975 and 2017. They used a computerized database to research key terms associated with mentoring to conduct their meta-analysis. Studies used for their research were coded by participants, programs, and research design by five raters. Additionally, weekly meetings were held with the raters to discuss any issues they faced. Results of the study show that mentoring programs for adolescents are an

effective intervention. They discovered a significant difference in the influence of youth mentoring based on the percentage of male mentors within their sample. There were differences among various youth outcomes, with social mentoring programs showing more significant effects on adolescents' perception of social support, their relationship with peers, and social skills. The adolescent's improved perception of support due to a caring mentor may lead to improvements in various outcomes, such as academics, self-esteem, and assertiveness (Chan et al., 2013).

Mentorship

The article titled *Academic Interventions for Elementary and Middle School Students with Low Socioeconomic Status* (Dietrichson et al., 2017) reviews the literature that seeks to identify academic interventions. The researchers in this literature review go into detail about the possible interventions that are cost-effective and can be utilized to offer support to adolescents. The interventions studied in the article were after-school programs, coaching/mentoring of students and personnel, computer-assisted instruction, content changes, cooperative learning, feedback and progress monitoring, incentives, increased resources, personnel development, behavioral interventions, small group instruction, summer programs, and tutoring. For the study, coaching and mentoring do not have to involve any pedagogical support but instead be seen as a role model or help adolescents with choices of courses to take (Dietrichson et al., 2017). The analysis included 101 studies performed from 2000 to 2014.

The Dietrichson et al., 2017 study shows that all interventions, coaching/mentoring, behavioral intervention, and personnel development, had a positive effect. These findings are further supported in the U.S. Department of Education report by Cindy Borden (2012). Borden

also recommended creating a mentor recruitment strategy plan to address the insufficient resources mentor programs face. She explained how this plan should include clear goals and strategies, ways to identify potential sources of mentors, specifying recruiting messages to attract new mentors, and allowing changes to make adjustments to the program when needed (Borden, 2012).

This study supports the need for more research on community mentoring programs and their influence on the adolescents enrolled. Mentor/coaching of personnel showed a slight improvement, which supports the argument that mentors are not adequately trained to work with the adolescents they work with. The relationship between the mentor and the adolescent can have a limited influence because the mentor may require proper training to form a bond with the adolescent.

Miller et al. (2013) conducted a study exploring mentoring program structure and its influence on adolescents participating. Their study explains how relationships built in the mentoring program can be formal and arranged through an organization that matches adolescents and adults. The study's researchers argued that pairing is usually based more on emotion and less on theory. With the lack of theoretical research and inattention to organizational practices, community-based mentoring programs may have mixed results with the adolescents they are trying to help. Miller et al. (2013) examined if and how program differences influence success rates for mentored adolescents referred to by the juvenile justice system.

To conduct their research, a targeted saturation sample approach was used to guide their study. The targeted sampling used the networking resources of four organizations to find their participants. The final sample included 1,197 respondents, encompassing all fifty states, Guam,

and Puerto Rico. The respondents were asked a series of questions to collect data in the quantitative analysis format for their research, such as meeting frequency and length and background checks.

From the data, Miller et al. (2013) affirmed three primary findings regarding mentorship programs. They found that the meeting frequency between the adolescent and mentor was positively correlated to a positive outcome. The duration of the program was positively correlated with adolescent success. Lastly, formal training of mentors was observed as indicative of program performance and goal realization.

Mentorship programs can also influence risky behaviors adolescents may experience. One of those experiences is suicidal thoughts instigated by cyberbullying. Rates of suicidal planning and attempts have been increasing throughout the United States. With almost every child having easy access to social media, cyberbullying is a significant issue contributing to this disturbing trend. Cyberbullying occurs via electronic platforms like texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media platforms (Aguayo et al., 2022). Cyberbullying also tends to be more severe than other forms of bullying because the incidents are repetitive and do not stop in the in-person setting. When comparing victims of cyberbullying to victims who are victimized, adolescents are 2.3 times more likely to contemplate suicide and 2.5 times more likely to attempt it (Geel et al., 2014). Additionally, youths from marginalized backgrounds, such as racial and ethnic groups, sexual orientation, and adolescents who are overweight, attempt suicide at a higher rate than their White counterparts when faced with cyberbullies (Aguayo et al., 2022).

Adolescents with mentoring relationships other than their family are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and have higher educational accomplishments. Strong mentoring and

nurturing adults foster positive mental health outcomes, social skills, lower levels of depression, heightened self-esteem, and higher levels of hope, life satisfaction, and motivation to succeed. Aguayo et al., 2022 conducted a study examining the association of adolescents having a mentoring adult relationship with a teacher or adult in school who had suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts in a large sample of U.S. high school students.

Aguayo et al., 2022 used data from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which is an anonymous survey of U.S. high school adolescents that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted. The study had an analytic sample of 22,592 students. Measures for the study included mentoring relationships, cyberbullying, outcomes related to suicide (ideation, planning, and attempt), age, sex, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, and being overweight.

The results from the study consisted of 56% White, 89% identified as heterosexual, and 87% reported having a mentoring relationship with a teacher or adult in school. 12% of students reported being victims of cyberbullying, with more females than males. 14% reported at least one suicidal attempt, 10% reported suicidal ideation, 8% had a plan, and 5% attempted suicide in the past 12 months. The study found that mentoring relationships were associated with lower odds of suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts. Proper mentorship programs may lower the risk of suicide among adolescents and limit the effects of bullying (Aguayo et al., 2022).

In addition to influencing an adolescent's social capital, mentoring can potentially influence socio-emotional health. Socio-emotional health is the ability or skill to meet the demands of one's social environment and psychological well-being, such as feelings of self-worth and purpose (Barbarin, 1993). Hurd et al. (2013) stress in their research how mentorship, a non-parental figure, can influence the child's development. For example, a relationship with a

mentor can reinforce parental messages, leading to stronger associations between parenting and adolescent outcomes. The researchers' study the developmental competencies among socio-economically early adolescents with mentors.

The Hurd et al. study participants comprised 259 adolescents who were required to answer a 13-item checklist related to their mentor involvement and 39 questions from the Social Skills Rating System that asked about the mentor's influence on their social skills. Psychological well-being was assessed using a 24-item modified version of the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being. The results found that shorter relationships with their mentors resulted in lower involvement and closeness; longer relationships had the opposite effect. Adolescents with more connected mentoring relationships had higher social skills and psychological well-being than those without mentors. Adolescents with no mentor or a less connected mentor did not differ in their levels of social skills and psychological well-being.

The study by Hurd et al. supports the need for understanding how mentorship programs influence the needs of adolescents. They found that mentoring relationships can promote social well-being while building positive relationships with their immediate family. They also noticed how youth paired with a non-parent mentor over a long period and with someone of a similar background positively influenced the adolescent. There are numerous mentoring programs throughout the state of New Jersey, and understanding how they are organized will help better understand how they influence those who are enrolled.

Across cultural, gender, and socioeconomic lines, adolescents with a mentor tend to do better in schools, be more social, and less likely to engage in problematic behaviors (Chan et al., 2016). Chan et al. (2016) aim to understand how naturally occurring mentorship in the

community influences an adolescent in the long term. Natural occurring mentorship for the purpose of their study is defined as an unrelated (non-family member) adult who has an ongoing and positive influence on the life of a protégé. The researchers examined psychological well-being, romantic relationships, education attainment, career success, and criminal activity in young adulthood to develop a holistic picture of the long-term mentorship relationship. They hypothesize that adolescents with a mentor would have greater psychological well-being in adulthood than those without a mentor, and adolescents with a mentor would have greater relationship satisfaction with their partner in adulthood than those who do not. They also predict that those with a mentor would have greater academic attainment, job satisfaction, and less criminal behavior.

The authors utilized data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (ADD Health) to test their hypothesis. Data were obtained through in-home interviews with children and parents with data that spanned over 15 years. The sample for the study consisted of 1350 participants who reported having a naturally occurring mentor, with 1145 participants reporting not having one. The researchers coded the responses from the participants.

The results from the study show that psychological well-being, relationship satisfaction, and educational attainment had positive results, while having a mentor during adolescence was not significantly related to job satisfaction in adulthood. Chan et al. (2016) demonstrated in their study that the benefits of mentoring can persist as adolescents transition into young adulthood. Adolescents reported having greater optimism and depressive symptoms. Mentors modeling desired behavior and interactions helped adolescents better understand, express, and regulate their behavior. Because mentors helped with college applications and schoolwork, which helped with educational attainment among adolescents. Mentors provided social capital by writing

letters of recommendation and introducing the adolescent to new opportunities. The researchers hypothesized that they did not see a positive influence on job satisfaction because there may not have been enough variation in responses to detect a meaningful effect or that young adults have not reached their career aspirations. Through their research, Chan et al. (2016) demonstrated how meaningful mentorship can have a lasting influence on adolescents.

Community Based-Mentorship Programs

According to Lachance et al., 2019, community-based mentoring organizations rarely have the resources and evidence-based practices to implement the proper programming and training necessary to create a truly effective program. The authors reviewed and analyzed mentoring programs from community-based and youth-serving non-profit organizations that enhance coaching to better understand their best practices, such as youth engagement. In 2016, Wisdom2Action, a mobilization project in Canada, worked towards understanding the best practices for mentorship programs that can serve the youth more effectively.

Wisdom2Action asked mentorship programs how they met their enrolled youth's needs. The organization interviewed mentor directors for 45 to 60 minutes in length. Questions asked inquired about the adolescent's readiness in the program, how mentorship influenced their work, how they became aware of the program, and the successes they experienced. The authors reviewed the responses from mentors and adolescents who participated and used thematic analysis to identify themes.

The study found that relationships were a common theme across mentoring interactions. Trust was established and strengthened through relationship building, allowing the mentorship relationship to grow naturally. Additionally, other themes included understanding the context of

the mentoring program, the importance of mentoring and not managing, being adaptive, and staying connected. Mentorship programs serve adolescents from varying backgrounds; therefore, it is paramount that evidence-based practices are utilized when developing a successful curriculum.

Social Competence

High-quality mentorship programs can improve academic achievement, self-worth, and social acceptance and decrease high-risk behavior in children (Thompson et al., 2016). According to Coller and Kuo (2013), factors that promote successful mentorship include setting clear visit expectations, trust, friendship building, recruiting mentors with experience working with children, adequate training, and the time the mentor is with the mentee. In their study, Coller and Kuo evaluate the effectiveness of the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) among Urban Latino adolescents enrolled in the Los Angeles school system.

The participants for their study were from a Title I-funded school with an enrollment of 376 adolescents. The student population was 91% Latino, with about 55% classified as English learners. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the adolescents were considered to live in poverty, with 100% of the students receiving free and reduced lunch. Development of the YEP program was based on mentoring research of other programs and mandatory training for people who participated. A tool initially used and developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters was adapted for the YEP program to collect data for the program's effectiveness. Children were to complete a satisfaction survey that scored them in youth-centeredness, emotional engagement, and youth dissatisfaction.

The study's outcome showed that participants in the YEP improved the adolescent's education and personal lives. After five years, the YEP program created a system where long-term and high-quality mentoring programs could help low-income Latino adolescents. The researchers also demonstrated that proper assessment tools could be utilized to monitor a program's success or identify which relationships are working and which need reassessment.

Community mentoring programs can also increase children's self-worth and connect them to their school, especially for at-risk children. Marino et al. (2019) evaluated the influence of mentoring by trained university students on children's self-esteem. Some community mentoring programs are designed to pair adults with at-risk adolescents to develop a trusting and supporting relationship and positive behaviors, while other mentoring programs promote self-esteem and positive development. Mentoring programs have been connected to school connectedness, reflecting a child's sense of belonging. A child with a low level of school connectedness can contribute to low self-esteem and a higher level of depression (Marino et al., (2019).

Marino et al. (2019) compared adolescents involved in a mentoring program titled Mentor-Up, a community-based program, with adolescents not enrolled. A total of 209 adolescents between the ages of 11 and 13 were required to complete a questionnaire assessing the child's demographics, self-esteem, and school connectedness. The data were evaluated using a linear mixed model approach for self-esteem and school connectedness. The findings showed that adolescents reported higher levels of self-esteem, while there was a decrease over time in adolescents not involved in the program. There was no significant difference in levels of school connectedness in adolescents who participated in the Mentor-up program to those who did not. The authors mention that a possibility for this could be that seven months is not enough to influence the school environment, thus needing more time between the mentor and adolescent to

build a stronger tie to the district, supporting the research stated in Chapter I that duration between mentor and adolescent may play a role in the efficiency of the program.

The authors' study supports the benefits of community-based mentoring programs. The Mentor-up program that was studied provided in-depth training, simulations, and pairing to ensure the child's needs were met.

Mentorship programs can enhance an adolescent's social and emotional well-being, potentially contributing to the youth maximizing their participation in education and employment. In their research, Barry et al. (2018) define Social and emotional skills as an individual having an integrated set of affective, cognitive, and behavioral competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. They report in their research how social and emotional well-being programs work towards developing an institution that provides the foundation for positive development for those enrolled. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (2015) cited in their study shows that social and emotional skills, combined with cognitive skills, are important drivers of adolescent success. While research shows the influence social and emotional learning has in the school setting, Barry et al. (2018) studied social and emotional learning within the community setting, such as mentoring programs, family-based youth development, social action projects, and others.

To be selected for the study, Barry et al. (2018) required that the interventions had one or more of the social/emotional skills as outlined by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) by the Young Foundation, implemented in the community setting, and be implemented as a universal instruction. Academic databases, such as the Applied Social

Science Index, were used to search for the interventions. The researchers employed the Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies to assess the quality of the evidence from the data gathering.

Of the 14 interventions reviewed in the research, six were evaluated within the last two years with a mix of interventions that ranged in adolescent enrollment duration. Five studies included mentorship programs, one-to-one mentoring from adult to peer models, and life skills training. One program Barry et al. (2018) found aimed to reduce adolescent pregnancy by training adolescent girls to become mentors saw significant improvement in self-esteem by the enrollees. Another community mentoring program called Coaching for Communities also reported significant improvements in young people's self-esteem and prosocial behavior while reducing negative emotions and anti-social behavior. Understanding the structure of community mentoring programs can significantly influence adolescents enrolled. The social and emotional well-being of the youth enrolled can improve while also potentially reducing other attributes that could hinder their success in life, such as low self-esteem.

As adolescents age, they become more susceptible to emotional and behavioral difficulties that can lead to anxiety, depression, and other behavioral problems (Bertha & Balazs, 2013). Erdem et al. (2016) explain how these issues can influence their relationship with their parents and peers while also in areas of academic achievement. Community mentorship can be one intervention that can influence adolescents by pairing them up with a non-family adult figure, which can reduce emotional distress (Erdem et al., 2016). The intensity of the relationship, frequency of meetings, and overall duration of the relationship play an important role when considering how a mentorship program influence social competence in an adolescent (Erdem et al., 2016). Erdem et al. explored indicators of positive youth development (PYD),

competence, confidence, connection, care, and compassion, character (5Cs) as mediators of associations of mentoring support with adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems. The central premise of the PYD framework is that youth development takes place in a bidirectional process between the adolescent and their ecological context through which they build strong relationships with the adults (Tolan et al., 2014).

Erdem et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between mentoring intensity and mentoring support among adolescents with emotional and behavioral issues using cross-sectional data from the Big Brother Big Sisters (BBBS) Canada community-based mentoring program. Adolescents who participated were of the ages of 6 to 17 and were not enrolled in any BBBS service during the previous 12 months. 52% of the participants were girls, and 48% were boys, while also coming from various cultural backgrounds.

The study found that mentorship programs can be a function of ecological assets that can help promote social competence among adolescents. Additionally, Erdem et al. showed the importance of stability and consistency of mentoring relationships to achieve positive outcomes for the adolescents enrolled in the program. Lastly, when mentoring adolescents, the study showed the importance of a program that can work with adolescents on specific developmental assets and positive development designed to support emotional and social competence.

Social Capital

The popularity of youth mentoring is evident in the number of programs, financial investment, and national attention in the United States over the past decade (Thompson et al., 2016). Additionally, President Obama expressed his support for mentoring intervention by launching *My Brother's Keeper*. This initiative uses mentoring to ameliorate the opportunity gap

experienced by many adolescent men of color (Duncan & Johnson, 2015). Thomas et al. conducted a study to determine how an adult mentor can improve social outcomes for adolescents in foster care. The researchers performed their study by reviewing articles related to mentoring and adolescent youth. The articles were reviewed and dispersed between study designs.

The articles discovered in their research showed multiple themes between mentoring and adolescence. Spare time was essential to many adolescents involved in the mentoring process, which they mentioned can lead to improved social outcomes, such as social capital. Another revelation in their study showed that adolescents believed that access to social capital is essential for older adolescents. Thomas et al. (2016) explained how natural mentors tend to be different from other mentors because they tend to be older and more experienced, thus being in a better position to provide resources and support, such as social capital, that the adolescents may not be able to offer.

In addition to supporting adolescents' needs, mentoring programs can offer support in developing social capital. The social capital theory suggests that an individual's social relationships can influence their personal development (Coleman, 1990), such as an adolescent transitioning from school to work. Sources of social capital can come from many sources, such as the community (Fabiansson, 2015) and mentorship programs. When adolescents understand that they have social capital, it can lead to upward mobility, thus creating positive life opportunities. Researchers Sheir et al. (2018) conducted a study to understand better how social capital contributes to the occupational goals of adolescents and how they achieve them. They conducted the study using a qualitative format of high school-aged adolescents enrolled in a

mentor-mentee program. The mentorship program was part of a non-profit organization and consisted of adolescents of lower socioeconomic status in Toronto over nine months.

The results of the study found that the use of mentoring programs helped with their development of building social capital. The adolescents responded that schools provided them with the opportunity to build upon social capital to help them transition from their post-secondary education life. Many mentioned in the study how they felt a lack of social support and barriers not being addressed, preventing them from understanding their social capital thus limiting their social mobility. The mentorship program provided them with an opportunity to access different forms of social capital, such as connections with professionals. The mentorship program was a means of helping the adolescents reach their fullest potential.

Youth-serving organizations, such as mentoring programs, play essential roles in adolescent participation in accessing networks that come from social relationships (Dill & Ozer, 2019). Social capital can develop when these social relationships are formed, which refers to leveraging networks to help people in their upward social mobility. In urban settings, community-based organizations can play a vital role in helping adolescents build upon their social capital network. Dill and Ozer conducted a study emphasizing the role of adult mentors who provide positive, supporting relationships to young adolescents in helping aid in their network-based social capital. Network-based social capital in this study is defined as community members' access to their leverage resources with the institutions and organizations for their individual or collective action (Dill & Ozer, 2019).

Dill and Ozer conducted one-hour interviews with youths in East Oakland, California, for their study. This location was chosen for their study because of the growing youth development

services offered in the community, which the researchers believe offers sources of social capital. The researchers explained how institutions in the city offer a safe space for meaningful activities, adult role models, and a location for social support among adolescents, which, for their study, was at the East Oakland Youth Development Center (EOYDC).

The result from their study shows that adolescent engagement, with the support of the mentor, can envision positive results for themselves, activating network-based social capital. The EOYDC provides adolescents with social leverage- information pertaining to education and employment that can improve a person's social mobility. One adolescent commented in their study how their mentor was able to use networks with different organizations to help identify potential scholarships, thus helping with his social mobility. Mentors and adolescents at the EOYDC work together to build relationships that strengthen the adolescent's social capital, which in turn can improve their social mobility and future goals (Dill & Ozer, 2019).

Mentoring can be a resource for young adolescents as they transition into adulthood. Mentorships have the ability to provide a wide range of social supports and networks on their behalf, which can help the adolescent reach their goals (Allen & Eby, 2011). Mentoring can have psychosocial benefits such as lower stress levels, higher life satisfaction, and lower rates of depression. Socioeconomic benefits from mentoring include increased interpersonal skills, perceived social support, and higher self-esteem (Can et al., 2018; Miranda-Chan et al., 2016). One type of mentoring, called capital mentoring, is when mentors provide guidance and advice from outside the adolescent's family (Gowdy & Spencer, 2021). Additionally, core mentoring tends to focus more on emotional support. Literature by Gowdy et al. (2022) explains how race, socioeconomic and social network can determine the type of mentorship the adolescent receives.

Gowdy et al. (2022) conducted a study to help determine the indicators of the type of mentorship the adolescent may receive.

To conduct their study, Gowdy et al. (2022) used the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, a multiwave longitudinal study of youth who have been followed from adolescence through adulthood. Two samples were used throughout the study: regression-based analysis and Conditional Inference Tree (C-Tree). The regression-based analysis consisted of a sample size of 2294, while the C-Tree was 4226. The study also included variables based on conceptual relevance and previous research, such as parental resources, demographics, and peer and school resources. GPAs and Picture Vocabulary Tests were also used. A Picture Vocabulary Test is a proxy verbal I.Q. that involves showing individuals four pictures and a word and then asking participants to identify the picture most associated with the word.

Their study found significant predictors for capital mentorship in relation to core mentorship in their regression analysis. Respondents whose parents are from the same neighborhood or had family who had friends were more likely to have a core mentorship when compared to a capital mentorship. Additionally, adolescents living in a community with a higher concentration of college adults were likelier to be part of a core mentorship. Adolescents with higher GPAs were likelier to have a capital mentor than those with lower GPAs.

The C-Tree findings showed that black and non-Hispanic participants with a Picture Vocabulary score of 60 or less were likelier to have a core mentor. Non-Black participants with a higher Picture Vocabulary score and whose parents had met more than two of their friends were least likely to have a core mentor of any other group. At the same time, adolescents living in neighborhoods where they feel cared for are also more likely to have a core mentor.

Gowdy et al. (2022) demonstrated in their study that the participant's scores on vocabulary test taken in adolescence was the best predictor for capital mentoring. Parental and neighborhood resources can also indicate the type of mentoring the adolescent will have. Race, such as Black non-Hispanic participants, were more likely to receive core mentoring, while youth with more community resources predicted capital mentoring. The predictors in the study can be used to implement better and/or improve current mentorship programs. As stated by researchers in their study, neighborhoods with less mobility may have an opportunity to promote capital mentoring in their program that integrates core mentoring practices.

Summary

Through the studies outlined in Chapter II, community-based mentoring programs remain a popular resource for adolescents. They can help improve the self-worth of the attendee while also providing them with necessary skills later on in life, such as building upon their social capital and competency. This study hopes to add to the existing literature on how community-based mentoring programs influence adolescents. Chapter III goes into detail on the methodology on how this study will be conducted.

Chapter III

Research Methods

Introduction

The first two chapters explained the topic of the study while discussing the theories that support the need for the research to occur. In addition, Chapter II summarized a series of studies that further explained the importance of studying community-based mentoring programs and their influence on adolescents. The purpose of Chapter III explains the study's intent, the methods chosen by the researcher, the participants, the process of participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, and the ethical concerns of the study.

Research Question

How do community-based mentoring programs influence adolescent's social capital and social competence?

Research Method Overview

To answer this question, the researcher employed a qualitative study. In a qualitative study, the researcher describes the research problem that can be best understood by exploring a concept or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research method for this study was grounded theory, where the researcher studied a phenomenon naturalistically to discover new theories based on the data collected. This is an inductive process where hypotheses and theories are generated through data analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2017). Lingard (2014) explained how grounded theory is supported by three features: iteration, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling. Iteration is the practice of subjecting new data to analysis as soon as it

is collected. Constant comparison is the balance of inductive and deductive reasoning, where the researcher formulates patterns in the data and elaborates on these data by checking them against incoming data. Theoretical sampling involved data collection procedures to evolve to allow a focus on key themes emerging in the analysis. The design of this study was intended to examine how community-based mentoring programs influenced an adolescent's social capital and competence. Data sources for this study included:

1. Structured interview questions with adolescents in a focus group format
2. Individual interview questions with the program directors
3. Unstructured interview questions
4. Field notes

The Researcher

The researcher has worked in public education for 12 years and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education, a Master's degree in Special Education, and a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. None of the participants had a direct relationship with the researcher.

Participants

The participants were comprised of a convenience sampling. The sample for this study came from adolescents enrolled in the community mentorship program during the 2022-2023 school year. Adolescents from the three community mentoring programs, North New Jersey (NJ), Central NJ, and South NJ, who participated in the study ranged from ages 10 to 18. To ensure a diverse sample, the researcher attempted to have at least one community mentorship program from each of the following regions of NJ: northern NJ, central NJ, and southern NJ. For

the purpose of this study, counties in northern NJ included Warren, Sussex, Morris, Passaic, Essex, Bergen, and Hudson; counties in central NJ included Union, Somerset, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, and Monmouth; and counties in southern NJ included Ocean, Burlington, Camden, Atlantic, Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland, and Cape May. These centers helped the researcher understand how community-based mentoring programs influenced adolescents' social capital and competence from various backgrounds across NJ.

Recruitment Procedures

Participants were recruited through community-based mentoring programs within NJ. The researcher sent e-mails to the directors of the mentorship programs in areas within the communities to help identify adolescents who fell under the criteria for the study. The researcher utilized his contacts in the field of education to help locate potential programs that could provide meaningful data for the study. If there was no reply from the program directors one week after the original e-mail, the researcher followed up with the program directors with another e-mail. After another week passed with no e-mail and no reply from the director, a follow-up phone call occurred. After three attempts of no confirmation, the researcher identified a different community-based mentoring program within the state of NJ to participate.

There were no incentives when recruiting adolescents to participate in the study. Before the focus group interview commenced, consent forms (see Appendix A) were sent home to explain how the data would be collected and stored. Parents/guardians then returned the consent form signed by themselves and the adolescent. This served as permission for them to participate in the study. Focus groups usually comprise of six to eight people (Busetto et al., 2020). The researcher recruited six adolescents per mentorship program for this study to gain richer information about the research question being investigated.

Participant Selection Process

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were selected based on their age and date of enrollment into the community mentorship program. Adolescents who were of the ages 10 to 18 and enrolled in the mentorship program were eligible to participate in the focus group. Participants consisted of different cultures, genders, and ethnicities, which contributed to the understanding of how community mentorship program influenced adolescents of varying backgrounds. Diversity in adolescent participation included, but were not limited to, gender identification, cultural and religious background, and sexual orientation. Participation was voluntary. Anonymity was ensured by each of the program directors and adolescents by being given a unique identification only the researcher possessed.

Ethics and Consent Forms

Researchers need to protect their research participants, develop trust, promote the integrity of the research, and guard against misconduct (Creswell & David, 2018). To ensure ethical standards are met, the researcher submitted the study proposal to the William Paterson University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Information such as the purpose of the study, recruiting methods, the participants, and focus questions were reviewed to ensure the subjects' welfare, rights, and privacy were protected. Once the approval was given, the researcher sent a parental/guardian consent form to the lead mentorship program director to distribute to adolescents matching the focus group participation criteria. As stated above, this form was signed by both the adolescent and parent/guardian and returned at the start of the interview and focus group. The confidentiality of all participants was also essential for those involved. The

program director and adolescents involved were given a unique I.D. to ensure anonymity only the researcher possessed.

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Data for this study were collected from focus group interviews, individual interviews with the program directors, and researcher field notes. The focus group participants consisted of a total of 18 adolescents: six from each of the three community mentoring programs. Questions that were approved (see Appendix B) by the IRB were asked to the focus group participants that were required to be answered. Individual interview questions with the director of each program were also asked and were required to be answered. Depending on the answers provided, follow-up questions were also asked for further clarification or a deeper understanding of the responses from both the program director and adolescents.

Method triangulation was utilized to provide validity to the collected data. Method triangulation involves the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon, which is frequently used in studies that include interviews, observation, and field notes (Cartner et al., 2014). The data collected were in the form of focus groups, interviews with the program director, and field notes. The use of field notes served as a way of constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, interview, focus groups, and document's valuable data (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). These focus groups consisted of the primary adolescent participants outlined in the sample section of Chapter III.

Interviewing the program director included the individual in charge of the mentorship program. Interviewing the program director allowed the researcher to see if there were commonality in their responses to that of the adolescents participating. Two of the interviews

were conducted using the Zoom (www.zoom.com) interface while one interview was conducted in person, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V. Lastly, field notes consisted of notes on the behavior and actions of the adolescent participants and program directors.

Focus Groups

Collecting data for the research consisted of focus group interviews that lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The purpose of this method was that focus groups allowed the researcher to gather information from people of similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a certain topic of interest (Mishra, 2016). Structured questions were asked of the adolescents to explain how the mentorship program influenced their social capital and competence. Unstructured questions were also asked to help the researcher gain a richer understanding of the question being answered. The focus group interviews took place at the facility. The setting was decided by each of the directors of mentorship programs. Allowing the director to choose the format was preferred because they knew the proper venue for maximum adolescent participation. Lastly, the researcher's observation of the participants was recorded throughout the interview, which was later analyzed.

The interviews took place in person, where the researcher utilized their personal cellular phone and another recording device to serve as an audio and video recorder to ensure accuracy in what was being transcribed.

Interview with Program Directors

Structured questions were asked to the program directors to explain how the mentorship program influenced the adolescent's social capital and competence. Each director determined the setting of the interview. Unstructured questions were also asked to help the researcher gain a

richer understanding of the question being answered. Each interview with the director consisted of 10 questions and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes.

Field Notes

Field notes were taken throughout the interviews that was later transcribed and used in coding the data. The purpose of the notes was to record the participant's body language and expressions that often support or refute the verbal responses to the questions asked by the researcher. Additionally, field notes from the interview allowed the researcher to ask unstructured follow-up questions for a deeper understanding of the question asked. Gorden's (1980) non-verbal indicators of kinesics (behavior reflected by body posture), proxemics (behaviors denoting relationships with the interviewer and interviewee), chronemics (speech makers such as gasp or silence) and paralinguistic (behavior linked to tenor, strength, or emotive color of vocal expression) have yielded thicker and richer data when compared to only using verbal data collection (Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Data Analysis

Transcription

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the interviews and focus groups were recorded using the researcher's personal cell phone and another recording device. Interviews done on Zoom were supported using Zoom's virtual meeting program. This recording feature served as the primary recording tool during interviews. When the recordings of the interviews were completed, the videos were transcribed to text using Rev.com, a company whose sole purpose is to transcribe video and/or audio to text. To ensure the accuracy of the transcription, the researcher reviewed the text and video recordings simultaneously.

Additionally, the researcher compared the data from the field notes to provide richer data and confirm or disconfirm emerging themes. Once the recordings were transcribed, the researcher began the coding process.

Coding, Themes, and Descriptions

Coding organizes data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Creswell & David, 2018). The researcher identified the codes in the transcripts by hand and highlighted any commonalities from the focus groups and program director interviews. Using codes to generate descriptions of the interviewee responses, the researcher examined the data to generate themes that emerged. The implementation of the coding process generated descriptions. Descriptions involved a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting (Creswell & David, 2018).

Narratives

Once the interviews were broken down into codes, themes, and descriptions, the data was presented in a narrative format. Narrative passages are used to convey the findings of the analysis (Creswell & David, 2018). The researcher developed a narrative that interconnected the themes from the various focus groups to identify commonalities.

Data Analysis Management

To manage the data being analyzed during the study, the researcher used Microsoft Excel. Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet program that can organize data and text. The data were implemented into the software after the coding had been completed by hand. The program helped the researcher identify the themes from the interviews and help answer the research question.

Validity and Reliability

To demonstrate methodological validity, the researcher systematically compared (triangulate) the responses from the participants in the focus groups, the program directors, and field notes. Reliability was assured by Peer Debriefing, where the codes, categories and themes were shared with peers to ensure that the research findings were accurate. The themes from the interviews and field notes demonstrated that the findings were valid. The researcher also provided direct quotes from the participants that further supported the findings.

Summary

The methodology explained in Chapter III provided a blueprint for how the study will be conducted and the data that will be collected. Chapter III also served as a guide for future researchers interested in conducting a similar study. Chapter IV reports on the findings from the research from the program directors and the adolescent focus groups that explain how the community-based mentoring programs influenced social capital and social competence among adolescents.

Chapter IV

Findings

This chapter contains the results of the grounded theory methodology study conducted to answer the research question: How do community-based mentoring programs influence adolescents' social capital and social competence? The themes generated from the data analysis were (a) mentoring framework, (b) social competence, and (c) social capital.

The data presented in this chapter include discussions with participant program directors and adolescents from three mentorship programs in three New Jersey regions defined in Chapter III. The researcher analyzed the data from the three program directors and 18 adolescents through qualitative methods including coding the data to discover categories and patterns that emerged from the interviews and adolescent focus groups. In-Vivo coding was utilized when analyzing the data to capture the adolescents' and program directors' lived experiences and perspectives. Field notes taken by the researcher were also used to support the findings from the focus group with the adolescents and individual interviews with the program directors. Observation of body language and reaction to responses was noted, which also contributed to richer data that were collected. These field notes were also used to develop codes that would later be categorized. The researcher identified the codes in the transcripts for any commonalities from the focus groups and program director interviews. Using codes to generate descriptions of the interviewee responses, the researcher examined the data to generate themes that emerged. The data were continuously analyzed through annotations, review of the transcripts, and review of the recordings until common themes emerged. Data in this chapter were presented in tables to emphasize the themes discovered in the research.

Sample

In total, the researcher contacted a total of 35 community mentoring programs throughout the state of New Jersey. Of those 35, three community mentoring programs agreed to participate in the researcher's study. Of the other 32 programs, seven declined to participate, one was out of business but their website was not updated, and 24 did not respond. In addition to agreeing to participate in individual interviews, each program director helped the researcher recruit a diverse participation focus group. The demographics of the program directors from the three community mentoring programs were a Hispanic female, a Caucasian male, and a Black male. The directors of each program also invited the researcher to conduct interviews with the adolescents in a focus group format at each center. Table 1 (below) represents the demographics of the program directors in greater detail. The interview with Program Director 1 and Program Director 2 was conducted via Zoom while Program Director 3's interview was conducted in person. The researcher kindly attempted to interview Program Director 3 via Zoom to ensure consistency, but the participant preferred a face-to face interview. Each of the focus groups from the three community mentoring programs was conducted in person at the community mentoring location.

Table 1

Program Directors

Pseudonym	Location	Gender	Race
Program Director 1	Central New Jersey	Male	White
Program Director 2	North New Jersey	Male	Black
Program Director 3	South New Jersey	Female	Hispanic

n=3

The demographics from the North New Jersey community mentoring program adolescent focus group consisted of six Blacks: three 12-year-olds, one 13-year-old, one 17-year-old, and

one 18-year-old. All participants from this organization were male. Table 2 (below) represents the participants in greater detail. The center was in Essex County in a large, multi-room building, located in the middle of town that resembled a fraternity feeling. The rooms in the building had activities that were meant to capture the interest of the adolescents in the program, such as a video game room and large kitchen. Parents, along with their adolescents, were continuously coming in and out of the building throughout the day, meeting with their mentors to prepare for the day's activities. Per their website, their mentoring program offers group mentoring activities for boys ages 12-18 on the third Saturday of the month from October to July.

Table 2

North New Jersey Adolescent Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race
North New Jersey Adolescent Participant 1	17	Male	Black
North New Jersey Adolescent Participant 2	18	Male	Black
North New Jersey Adolescent Participant 3	12	Male	Black
North New Jersey Adolescent Participant 4	12	Male	Black
North New Jersey Adolescent Participant 5	13	Male	Black
North New Jersey Adolescent Participant 6	12	Male	Black

n=6

The Central New Jersey Community mentoring program participants were comprised of six adolescents: one 15-year-old White female, one 15-year-old Hispanic female, one 16-year-old White female, one 17-year-old Asian male, and two 17-year-old White females. Table 3 (below) represents the participants in greater detail. The Central New Jersey community mentoring program was in Hunterdon County in the middle of town, in front of a church. The

house was an old Victorian with two floors and multiple rooms that were designed to capture the interests of the adolescents enrolled, such as art. Upon entering, the researcher was greeted with a smiling adolescent who would later become one of the participants in the focus group. Through laughter and playing of video games together, adolescents could be seen enjoying each other's company in the large living room. Adolescents were coming in and out of the building freely, fitting the description provided by one of the program directors as free-range children. Per their website, each of the adolescents' sets a time each week to meet with the program directors. The organization helps keep adolescents connected with the community, assists in college/work, and offers a caring, supportive adult as an ally to help teens in their program. The focus group interview was conducted in a large room on the second floor.

Table 3*Central New Jersey Adolescent Participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race
Central New Jersey Adolescent Participant 1	17	Female	White
Central New Jersey Adolescent Participant 2	17	Female	White
Central New Jersey Adolescent Participant 3	17	Male	Asian
Central New Jersey Adolescent Participant 4	16	Female	White
Central New Jersey Adolescent Participant 5	15	Female	Hispanic
Central New Jersey Adolescent Participant 6	15	Female	White

n=6

The South New Jersey Community mentoring program participants were comprised of six adolescents: two 11-year-olds (one male and one female), a 10-year-old Black male, a 15-year-old Hispanic female, a 17-year-old Hispanic female, and an 18-year-old Hispanic female.

Table 4 (below) represents the participants in greater detail. The South New Jersey Community Mentoring Program was in Cumberland County, in what could be described as an industrial zone. Across the street from the center was a glass manufacturing center where a railroad track went through the center of town and connected to the factory. The community mentoring center was a one floor building with a main room, three offices, and one side room that was filled with toys from a recent toy drive. Music was playing that greeted anyone who walked in. Adolescents arrived after school where they were provided with snacks prior to participating in the focus group interview. The adolescents were friendly, displaying smiles, and asking the researcher questions about the study and what to expect. Per their website, the mentoring program provides a combination of one-on-one, group, and peer mentoring services. The community mentoring program, according to their website, works to incorporate effective mentoring practices within their organization by utilizing the resources available to them, such as from the National Mentoring Resource Center.

Table 4

South New Jersey Adolescent Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race
South New Jersey Adolescent Participant 1	15	Female	Hispanic
South New Jersey Adolescent Participant 2	17	Female	Hispanic
South New Jersey Adolescent Participant 3	18	Female	Hispanic
South New Jersey Adolescent Participant 4	10	Male	Black
South New Jersey Adolescent Participant 5	11	Male	White
South New Jersey Adolescent Participant 6	11	Female	White

n=6

Adolescent Enrollment

Table 5 (below) represents the data discovered through the interviews with the program directors and the adolescent focus groups related to enrollment within the community mentoring program.

Table 5

Adolescent Enrollment

Codes	Categories	Sample Quotes
Mental Health Social Issue Guidance Guide Friends	Personal Issues	<p>Program Director 2: mostly, the kids are looking for guidance, and something to do. We offer an opportunity for them to be around boys their age, doing things that they like to do under the guidance of responsible men.</p> <p>Central New Jersey Adolescent 3: I had to go to a couple of mental rehabilitation, like PHP programs. I was one step away from residential for a few months 'cause of my declining mental health after the pandemic.</p>
Parents Mom	Parent/Guardian Influence	<p>Program Director 3: Their parents. I hate to say it, but it's their parents.</p> <p>South New Jersey Adolescent 6: My parents signed me up.</p>
Annoyed Don't Know Pushback Resistant Timid Nervous No Opinion	Program Enrollment Perception	<p>Program Director 3: They didn't know what to expect. Some of them didn't wanna be here because their parents said they needed to be here. After they got here, you get a little bit of pushback...</p> <p>North Jersey Adolescent 3: When my mom first told me that I had to go, I really felt annoyed. I didn't really know what it was gonna be, what it was gonna be about. like it now because I was away from home, and I actually could do something without being with my parents.</p>

Personal Issues

The categories that emerged from the codes suggested that there were two main reasons adolescents were enrolling in the program: those with personal issues and parental/guardian influence. This was supported through the interview responses with the program directors. Codes such as mental health, guidance, depressed, and friends were categorized under the personal issues category. The North Jersey mentoring center director, Program Director 2, reported:

Mostly, the kids are looking for guidance and something to do. We offer an opportunity for them to be around boys their age, doing things that they like to do under the guidance of responsible men. (Program Director 2).

In addition, Program Director 1 provided additional information that further supported the personal reasons category for the adolescents enrolling in their program. It is worth noting that this program supports teens and helps create education plans based on the adolescent's strengths and goals, where mentoring and guidance are also provided.

So, some kids leave because they're having difficulties academically or they want to focus on something very specific academically that the school is not providing. In some cases, kids leave school because of a social issue, they've been bullied, or an emotional issue where they're, they're feeling school-phobic. (Program Director 1).

Discussing reasons for enrolling yielded similar responses from the adolescents during the focus group interviews. The personal issues category was developed terms given by the adolescents, which included mental health issues or friends, as reflected in the responses by South New Jersey Adolescent 5, North New Jersey Adolescent 4, and Central New Jersey Adolescent 3.

So I came here because I couldn't make friends because I didn't have any friends to make in my area (South New Jersey Adolescent 5).

I wanted to make new friends (North New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Through my 10th grade year, I had to go to a couple of mental rehabilitation programs. I was one step away from residential for a few months 'cause of my declining mental health after the pandemic (Central New Jersey Adolescent 3).

North New Jersey Adolescent 3 enrolled in the North New Jersey community mentoring program because their parent wanted to help their child find an individual who could guide them on the “right path.”

She (mom) made me go to try and see if I could find, like, somebody in my life to really guide me on the right path (North New Jersey Adolescent 3).

Parent/Guardian Influence

Another category that emerged from the individual interviews and adolescent focus groups related to parents/guardians influence. Coding that emerged from the study, such as mom and parents, showed that parents/guardians were an influence as to why they enrolled in their community mentoring program. Program Director 3 explained that adolescents who enroll in their program do so mainly because of their parents and need a place for after school.

Their parents. I hate to say it, but... Excuse me. But it's their parents (Program Director 3).

Most of the boys are signed up by their parents (Program Director 2).

Common responses from other adolescents who enrolled in the community mentoring program supported the responses given by Program Director 3. North New Jersey Adolescent 6 and South New Jersey Adolescent 6 responses below were like the other participants.

My mom made me do it at first, but I like it now; it's pretty good (North New Jersey Adolescent 6).

My parents signed me up (South New Jersey Adolescent 6).

Program Enrollment Perception

When asked about how the adolescents felt when enrolling in the program, the directors explained that the adolescents did not appear to have specific expectations of what to expect when they started. Terms such as uncertain and annoyance appeared throughout the response of the question, which aligns with the category that emerged of program enrollment perception. Additionally, each program director answered in their own way how, over time, the adolescents became more comfortable with attending. For example, Program Director 3 responded as follows:

A lot of them didn't know what to expect. Some didn't want to be here because their parents said they needed to be here. After they got here, uh, you, you know, you get a little bit of pushback. "I don't wanna do that. What are we doing that for?" If you're patient with them and show them the end result of the program, they come around (Program Director 3).

Before they join, I don't know that they have a sense of exactly how the mentoring piece is gonna work. I think they, they just sort of join and they just think, "Oh, this is like gonna be some classes (Program Director 1).

Terms from the adolescents' responses supported Program Director 3's statement, where they responded that they were timid, uncertain, or nervous, don't know or did not have an opinion about attending the program. Additionally, some adolescents expressed how they were annoyed about having to attend. Those adolescents began to express some form of positivity of attending because they felt comfortable attending, which is reflected in the responses by South New Jersey Adolescent 2, North New Jersey Adolescent 6, and North New Jersey Adolescent 3.

I think, like the first day here, I was very timid 'cause of new environments and things like that. I was very aware, just listening to everybody's conversations, trying to feel it out. but, now, I'm trying to think, and it's like, I really didn't have anything to worry about. Because you know, different people like to take different times to adjust to some things. I have taken a lot out of this program and being here (South New Jersey Adolescent 2).

When I first, for my, when my mom first told me that I have to go, I really felt annoyed. Like, I didn't really know what it was gonna be, what it was gonna be about...I like it now because I was away from home, and I actually could do something without being with my parents (North New Jersey Adolescent 6).

I was kind of nervous that I wouldn't, like, get along with anybody, and once I started showing up more and more throughout the times I showed up, I got along with everyone (North New Jersey Adolescent 3)

Mentoring Framework

Table 6 (below) represents the data discovered through the interviews with the program directors and the adolescent focus groups related to the program organization within the community mentoring program. The codes for Table 6 exemplify the framework of the

mentoring programs that participated. Research, as stated in Chapter II, found that the meeting frequency, duration of the program, relationship building and, formal training of mentors was observed as indicative of program performance and influence. Additionally, as stated in Chapter I, mentors in a community mentorship program who are of similar demographics can influence the adolescent experience.

Table 6*Mentoring Framework*

Codes	Categories	Sample Quotes
Empathy Respectful Honest Rapport Listener Support Caring Nice Trust	Mentorship Characteristics	<p>Program Director 1: I think the thing that is sort of critical in developing a rapport with a mentee is that the kid needs to know that you don't have a personal agenda, that you are there to support them in figuring out who they are, what they want, and the life that they want for themselves.</p> <p>Central New Jersey Adolescent 4: I think that a good mentor's like very supportive. I had wanted to enlist in the military and when I brought it up to my mentor, she was kind of hesitant, but she was like a really big supporter in the whole process and she helped me to find resources. And I ended up looking forward to discussing it with her a lot.</p>
Non-Formal Pairing Groups Randomly	Mentorship/Adolescent Pairing	<p>Program Director 2: In our program, we do group mentoring. It's usually done randomly unless we find young people who are Spanish or Creole-only speaking. Then we have Spanish and Creole speaking mentors, then we match them with someone who can appropriately understand them, bring similar cultures, and also be able to communicate effectively with their parents.</p>

(Table 6, cont.)

Code Switching Diversity Relaxed No Impact	Social Justice Mentoring	Program Director 3: Our kids are from different various races and religions, and what we try to do here through the programs is give the kids here an overview of the different races, nationalities and ethnic groups that are out there. For instance, in Hispanic Month, we did a little program about all the countries that are Hispanic and Latino...
Open Dialogue Fun Attached Nice Friendly Success	Mentorship/Adolescent Relationship	South New Jersey Adolescent 2: I will say it influenced me positively. I feel more relaxed and I feel like I can say certain things and then they'll get it and they always do. Program Director 3: Last year, we had a girl that goes for Youth of the Year. It's a program that we put the kids through. At the end, you get a scholarship. She was so attached to her mentor that when she had to go to leave for college, she just cried. So, there is an attachment here. Central New Jersey Adolescent 6: I just think it's better than like a teacher that's just trying to be like further you along in class. They actually like hear about your well-being and your success.

Mentorship Characteristics

Each of the program directors explained how they felt it is important that their mentors display empathy and be a listener when working with the adolescents in their program. This is shown in the response by Program Director 3 and Program Director 2.

You need to be a listener. You need to be caring. It's hard, I think, to put into words, but you have to care for the child or the individual you're mentoring, adults, teenagers, kids. You have to try to get on their level. A lot of kids have problems that any individual adult would say, "Oh, just poo-poo it." But these are problems that the kids are going for. I think you need to take

a step back, put yourself in their shoes and say, "Wait a minute. To me, it's a really big deal. It's a really big deal to them. Let's try to find how to fix it (Program Director 3).

Listener would be the number one characteristic. Empathy would be a strong second. Then guess willingness to serve. Those three are the most important. (Program Director 2).

Similarly, many of the adolescents mentioned they also wanted their mentors to display similar characteristics that were mentioned by the program directors. Terms used by the adolescents to describe these characteristics included: respect, honest, fun, cooperative, supportive, and comfortable.

I feel like it has to be someone you're comfortable talking with, and I feel like just someone you can talk with and that you might have similar personalities in a way. 'Cause when, I first started here, I had a different mentor than the one I have now. I just felt like I wasn't really getting anything out of mentoring. I was just doing it kind of just to do it. But now, my mentor, I can just talk with her about anything, which is great (Central New Jersey Adolescent 1).

I'd describe it like it's like a fun relationship. you look forward to speaking with them, updating them about what's going on and you work through what isn't working and you celebrate what's, what is working. It's friendly and you can feel that they care about you are genuinely like interested what's going on in your life (Central New Jersey Adolescent 2).

Program Director 1 explained that the mentor they seek is someone who could build rapport with the adolescent. In addition to building a rapport with the adolescent, the director stressed the importance of not pushing a personal agenda and allowing the adolescent to figure out who they are on their own.

I think the thing that is sort of critical in developing a rapport with a mentee is that the kid needs to know that you don't have a personal agenda, that you are there to support them in figuring out who they are, what they want in life, what they want for themselves, and that you're not trying to sell anything (Program Director 1).

The response from Program Director 1 was supported by the response provided by Central New Jersey Adolescent 3 from the adolescent focus group from the first community mentoring program. The quote below demonstrated a relationship that the mentor and adolescent have that addresses their needs, not the mentor's.

I kinda like to think about my relationship with teachers before I was here, which was kind of like a transactional process. They kinda give you their answers, you give them their question, and it's just kinda like a back-and-forth thing. But here, it's more, more like personal. You can, for example, my mentor, talk to him about school stuff, obviously. But along with that is talking to him about music, sports, just whatever. It's not like you just show up for an hour and talk about whatever you need to talk about and then you get out as fast as possible. It's more like you want to interact with this person a little (Central New Jersey Adolescent 3).

Central New Jersey Adolescent 2 nodded in agreement and added rapport to their answer when discussing that comfort was an important characteristic that they look for. The term rapport was also mentioned by Program Director 1 as a characteristic they feel is important in a mentor.

Yeah. I guess just adding to that, I definitely like being able to speak to them very openly. Whether it's academically related or outside of studying related. I also like being able to speak with them openly and feel comfortable with them, kind of like having a rapport. I think also like knowing that whatever you do, you choose, it's not going to be met with judgment (Central New Jersey Adolescent 2).

Mentor/Adolescent Pairing and Relationship

Mentor/adolescent pairing and relationships were also explored in this study. Two of the three program directors responded that there was no formal pairing between the mentors and adolescents enrolled. Program Director 3 explained how her program has older adolescents there to help the younger ones when needed.

It's not usually one on one. What we do, is we have a staff of part-timers, and the first hour of business here is schoolwork and homework. It's called Power Hour, and the first hour is homework. And our staff is good at helping the kids through their homework. If we have a problem, the younger kids always help the older kids who are here always help the younger ones (Program Director 3).

While Program Director 1 mentioned there was no formal process when pairing adolescents with their mentor, they did take into consideration the skills and support the mentor could offer that would best support the needs of the adolescent. Program Director 1 explained how the relationship with the parents was considered when pairing. While the process might not be formal, strategic pairing was considered within the program when warranted.

So, in some cases, it's not a particularly formal process... We think about the relationships that a kid may have with his or her parents and we try to match them. Sometimes it's just, really a plain gender thing. Sometimes, parents tell us they would prefer to have a female or male mentor for their child. So, sometimes we consider that. But it mostly, I think, comes down to just, the kid's kind of sensibility (Program Director 1).

Program Director 1 further explained how the adolescents perceived the mentors as friends once the program ended, signifying a close bond that was formed while enrolled.

Afterwards, they, I think they feel like we're, a friend (laughs). That's how they perceive us (Program Director 1).

Program Director 2 responded that their mentoring program does group mentoring that was assembled at random unless specific situations arisen where more planning was required.

In our program, we do group mentoring. So, it's usually done randomly unless we find young people who are Spanish or Creole-only speaking. Then we have Spanish and Creole-speaking mentors then we match them with someone who can appropriately understand them, bring similar cultures, and also be able to communicate effectively with their parents. (Program Director 2).

The responses from the directors were similar to the responses from the adolescents. South New Jersey Adolescent 5 explained how the relationship was cordial and how they felt they can be open with their mentor.

I just learned to have like, you know, good relations, and I could always like ask for help whether it's homework or anything (South New Jersey Adolescent 5).

While only two of the three directors responded that they have no strategic planning when pairing adolescents with their mentors, all of them mentioned that the adolescents have a relationship with their mentor based on trust and caring for one another. Program Director 3's response and description of one adolescent's attachment to her mentor was clearly shown.

Last year, we had a girl that went from Youth of the Year. It's a program that we put the kids through, and in the end, you get a scholarship. She was so attached to her mentor that when she had to go to leave for college, she just cried. So, there is an attachment here. (Program Director 3).

When comparing their responses to the adolescents, one adolescent explained how their relationship helped them prepare for college.

I'd say I have a pretty good relationship with them, but they're, like, helping me get ready for college, scholarships and stuff (North New Jersey Adolescent 2).

A pattern that emerged from the focus group interviews revealed that trust was formed between the adolescent and mentor. For example, Central New Jersey Adolescent 3 explained how her relationship with her mentor was one she feels trust has been established, which was shown in her response about being open to disagreement without issues forming between the two.

We have a relationship where if one of us disagrees with the other one, there's no issue there. That we understand each other's opinions. We respect that. Something I forgot to mention in the last section is that, um, you don't always want, the mentor to be like gassing you up the whole time, telling you like, "Everything's going great, you're doing great." If they see a problem, I would like them to tell me (Central New Jersey Adolescent 3).

I'd say it's neutral but then I also feel I could trust them at the same time (South New Jersey Adolescent 3).

I could trust someone. I would trust them (South New Jersey Adolescent 4).

An interesting response came from South New Jersey Adolescent 5, where they mentioned how they could tell their mentor what is occurring in their lives, but they still felt the need to keep their “guard up.”

So through the years I've been here, I've grown to like, have relations with the people here, but like, I usually can tell them most of everything that's going on, but, there's some stuff that I'm probably just gonna keep to myself. (South New Jersey Adolescent 5).

Central New Jersey Adolescent 6 explained how the relationship he formed with his mentor was one he feels was better than a teacher relationship. He explained how he felt the relationship he has was one where they care about his well-being and success.

I just think it's better than a teacher who's just trying to be like further you along in class. They like actually take, like hear about your well-being and your success (Central New Jersey Adolescent 6).

Social Justice Mentoring

As stated in Chapter I and earlier in Chapter IV, social justice mentoring could influence the adolescents' experience within the mentoring program. Being culturally responsive requires valuing diversity and working towards a community and workplace where diversity is valued (Hopf et al., 2021). Two of the three directors responded that they practice being culturally responsive in their program when working with adolescents. Program Director 2 explained the importance of being culturally responsive in his North Jersey center.

I think that with this world becoming smaller and smaller, young people require diversity in their mentors. So, I can show the young man how to be a positive young man and share with him someone of similar cultural values (Program Director 2).

Program Director 2's response about being able to code-switch was reflected in the adolescents in his specific program. Since his program was 100% African American male mentors and adolescents, the question was slightly modified to determine if the cultural

background of mentor that was different from their current exposure would influence their experience in the program. North New Jersey Adolescent 2's response to the question was reflective of Program Director 2's response regarding code-switching, which he defines as the ability to adjust to the culture they are in.

I'm black, you're white, and then, like, but you're an adult, though, so like you've seen, like, you- you're an adult, and you know how, like, some stuff works, and even though we're not gonna see the world the same way, you'll still at least be able to show me some things (North New Jersey Adolescent 2).

Program Director 1 answered the question by explaining how the culture in their program tended to be of similar makeup, which he explained is similar to the makeup of the adolescents enrolled in his program.

The three mentors here are white, middle-class, college-educated, and all lived in New Jersey for most of their lives. Most of the kids, almost all the kids that we have here are kind of white (Program Director 1).

Program Director 1 provided further evidence to suggest that cultural responsiveness was being considered when working with the adolescents enrolled. The director explained how instances, such as politics, could play a role in their pairing. The political leaning within the home could influence the pairing, and the director also explained how they work to transcend it.

There have been instances where we have a mentor who is very sort of like progressive, liberal-leaning. And they have a mentee who comes from a very conservative, it might be sort of Evangelical Christian home, as well as politically conservative. And that can be vice versa. And we have had mentors in the past who have been sort of pretty conservative who've encountered,

have mentored, like, you know, trans kids. And, and there can be, so there can be tension...I mean, we do tend to be able to transcend that. (Program Director 1).

When comparing the cultural responsiveness responses from the adolescents, a common response was that they did not know how the cultural background of their mentor influenced their experience in the program or that it had no influence. A common trend was that they cared more about the character of the mentor they were paired with and if they could “get along” with each other. North New Jersey Adolescent 4's response was reflected in the statement above, similar to how Program Director 1 answered.

It wouldn't benefit me from the culture. As long as we like, get along, and try and see right to left (North New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Two adolescents expressed that their mentor's cultural background had positively influenced their experience in the program because they felt like they had someone to talk to with similar experiences. South New Jersey Adolescent 2's answer was able to capture that emotion in their response, which is reflective of the response given by North New Jersey Adolescent 2.

I feel me personally, I'm a little biased when it comes to questions about this because I came from a place where it's not a lot of Hispanics. So when I started here and the staff was Hispanic, I guess I took more out of it? 'cause I felt, I did feel more comfortable. I will say that because it's like my people, you know? So I will say, yeah. It influenced me positively. I feel more relaxed, and I feel like I can say certain things and then they'll get it and they always do (South New Jersey Adolescent 2).

We're the same race, we gotta stick together and like, try and boost me... (North New Jersey Adolescent 2).

Social Competence

Table 7 (below) represents the data discovered through the interviews with the program directors and the adolescent focus groups related to the community mentoring program's influence on adolescents' social competence.

Table 7

Social Competence

Codes	Categories	Sample Quotes
Friends Family Socially Shy People	Social life	<p>Program Director 3: We had a couple kids, they were so shy. They wouldn't even look at you when you talked to them. And the mentors just kept at it, helped them with their homework, got them involved in the different programs, got them involved in the arts and crafts, and that's where they blossomed. Once they realized, "Hey, I can contribute," and I think that's important, when they realize they can contribute to something, their self-esteem goes up and they feel worth.</p> <p>South New Jersey Adolescent 1: I'm not just sitting there by myself, doing my homework. I'm surrounded by people. And not just like, by myself and there's a lot of difference between FaceTiming someone and then doing things with them than in person. So I guess it's more effective.</p>
Talk Awareness View Confidence Guidance Reflect Self-Esteem	Self-awareness	<p>Program Director 1: Often one of the mentors is present to witness something, and then in, so in mentor meetings, we can help kids sort of like process situations. So we can talk about things and, and we can, you know, like, assess like, "Well, so what happened?" Like, and they can talk about it, and I can say like, "Well, this is what I saw, and this is what I think is going on with this other kid."</p> <p>North Jersey Adolescent 3: It showed me if I'm going down the wrong path, they point it out to me. They try and get me to go on the right path.</p>

(Table 7, cont.)

Prioritization Acknowledge Conversations Decisions Right Path Deal with People Prioritize Confident Freedom	Decision- making	Program Director 2: That's a major, major focus on what we're doing. Thus the book, <i>Make A Decision</i> . We pride ourselves in the fact that they can make better decisions and they can acknowledge bad decisions and be self-transparent with themselves. North New Jersey Adolescent 4: To be honest, I think it changed me a little bit. I'm doing better in school, and I make better decisions.
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Social Life

When questions were asked to the program directors how the programs have influenced the adolescents' social lives, the program directors responded with how it positively influenced their lives. Terms such as friends, family, socialization, shy, and people were used to describe their answers that fell under the social life category. The directors explained how their program has helped the adolescents become more social with their peers. Program Director 1 compared his program to a family community that was beneficial for kids socially.

By and large, our program is really good for kids socially. Many of them have had struggles, socially, in public school, or, or private school. They come here, and it is just more sort of like a family community. They get to know one another pretty intimately (Program Director 1).

Program Director 3 provided a similar response by providing an example of more than one adolescent who entered their program was shy, but eventually became more social by being involved in different programs, resulting in their self-esteem increasing, along with their feeling of self-worth.

We had a couple kids, unfortunately they're not here this time, but we had a couple kids, they were so shy. They wouldn't even look at you, would not look at you wh- when you talked to them. And the mentors, just kept at it, kept at it, helped them with their homework, got them involved in the different programs, got them involved in the arts and crafts, and that's where they blossomed. Once they realize, "Hey, I can contribute," and I think that's important, when they realize they can contribute to something, their self-esteem goes up and they feel worth (Program Director 3).

Program Director 2 explained in his statement how it allows the boys within the program to be with others of similar backgrounds and participate in activities that might be outside the norm of their daily lives.

This gives boys an opportunity to do and be with other boys, kind of like when I was a kid, and how Boy Scouts was... And it was kind of welcoming to be doing things, or be in a culture that was outside of the norm, if you just go outside and play football (Program Director 2).

When comparing the responses to the adolescent focus groups, a trend emerged where adolescents responded that they felt their social life had improved since entering the program. Central New Jersey Adolescent 2 explained how she had more time with her friends, prioritized her life, and spent more time with her family.

It's given me more time to be with my friends, and also it's like, it's something I've talked about with my mentor. I think it has improved (social life) to a degree because I have more opportunities to do it. I also definitely spend a lot more time with family than I used to (Central New Jersey Adolescent 2).

North New Jersey Adolescent 1 and North New Jersey Adolescent 2's responses were similar to the trend that was discovered through the focus group interviews on how their social life has positively been influenced since enrolling into the community mentoring program.

It makes me a more sociable person. 'Cause, like, before I wasn't very sociable, so now I'm more, talkative, and outgoing (North New Jersey Adolescent 1).

It's affected me because I used to be shy, but since I've been here for a while, it's gotten me to try new things (North New Jersey Adolescent 2).

South New Jersey Adolescent 5's influence was similar to North New Jersey Adolescent 2, where he explained how he is more open to meeting new people and making new friends.

I just can talk more openly and make new friends and meeting people, doing more activities, you know, instead of just staying home and doing nothing, going to my room (North New Jersey Adolescent 5).

One interesting response from South New Jersey Adolescent 1 was how she mentioned she felt it was effective because she was not talking to people just on FaceTime, which South New Jersey Adolescent 2 excitedly agreed with. This excitement was observed through her body language and field notes during the focus group interviews.

When I come home now, I'm not just sitting there by myself, doing my homework. I'm surrounded by people, and here's a lot of difference between FaceTiming someone and then doing things with them than in person (South New Jersey Adolescent 1).

Exactly what she said. Yeah. I've grown a lot socially. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Can't word it better (South New Jersey Adolescent 2).

It was also discovered through the focus groups that a common trend of no influence on the adolescents since enrolling in the community mentoring program. North Jersey Adolescent 3 explained how he continued to enjoy the same social life while others in this focus group nodded in agreement, which was noted in the field notes.

No real effect on me. I've always wanted to be outside, play basketball with my friends, and do stuff outside and inside at the same time (North New Jersey Adolescent 3).

South New Jersey Adolescent 4's answer supported North New Jersey Adolescent 2 above by answering how they still aligned themselves with the same people, mentioning how the program has not influenced their social life.

Well, I talk to the same person. I talk to the same people (South New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Okay, did you see, have you noticed a change in maybe talking to others? Or no (Researcher)?

No (South New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Self-Awareness

When asked how the mentoring program influenced the adolescent's self-perception, self-competence, and self-esteem, the directors answered that their programs helped develop a better sense of awareness. Terms such as talk and awareness were reflected in their responses, which were categorized as self-awareness. Additionally, responses that were similar in context by the focus group adolescents, such as view, were placed under the same category.

Program Director 1 explained how this occurred because the mentors in his program could witness situations adolescents go through and talk through them in a non-coercive environment.

Often one of the mentors is present to witness the situation, and then in mentor meetings, we can help kids sort of like process situations. So we can talk about things and we can assess like, "Well, so what happened?" Like, and they can talk about it, and I can say like, "Well, this is what I saw, and this is what I think is going on with this other kid...I think it really goes back to this idea that, that like, because we're a non-coercive environment and the kids are sort of free to do what they wanna do... It's dialectical in that way, like behavior response (Program Director 1).

While Program Director 1 explained how the mentors appeared to engage more in behavior responses and talking to adolescents, the other directors explained how they have specific exercises within their program they run through to help adolescents with self-competence, self-esteem, and self-perception. Program Director 3 provided an example in her program where adolescents are asked to reflect on their daily decisions.

Through this program, I'll ask the question, "Give me your high and your low for today. What was your reaction to your high and your low?" I say to them, "Look, the reaction that you have today, be it good, bad, or indifferent, is gonna affect how you are and how you are to other people tomorrow." The question back to me is, "Well, why should I be concerned about what other people think?" Which is a good question (Program Director 3).

Program Director 2's exercises differed from Program Director 3's where he explained how they use case studies, role-playing exercises, and group activities to formulate responses to the situations presented.

What we do is we use case studies and role-playing exercises to put them in situations where they have to answer the question and ask "If this happened to you, what would you do?" That can be anything from cyber-bullying to using marijuana edibles to date rape to cheating on

a test... So we do a thing called tag team role-playing. So let's just say if you are giving an example of what you've done, and then you come to a roadblock to be like, "Wow, I don't know how to answer that question," your colleague, your next friend in your mentor group, taps your shoulder, and then he jumps in, and he completes the role-play... And so, what we do with the boys is we attempt to help them to recognize where their self-esteem is low, uh, and to develop strategies based upon practice of whatever skills that they're looking to accomplish (Program Director 3).

The findings from the program directors were similar in context given by the adolescents. While the terms may be different from the directors, the trend in responses from the adolescents were similar. North New Jersey Adolescent 3 explained how the program helped him follow the “right path” if he wanders.

It showed me that if I'm going down the wrong path, they point it out to me. They try and get me to go on the right path (North New Jersey Adolescent 3).

South New Jersey Adolescents 2 and 5 explained how the program has taught them to read and adapt to various situations they may encounter in their lives.

I feel like being here has put me in a lot of positions where it's like I've had to learn how to perceive others and learn how to read others. I've had to learn to adapt to certain situations or how to read different people, so I have had some growth in myself, in that category. (South New Jersey Adolescent 2).

I first came here I was kinda just like, you know, like I said, trying to make friends and you know, have other problems, but then this program really helped me to view things differently when I was at, like that low. And um, my self-esteem, it really boosted up after... (South New Jersey Adolescent 5).

Central New Jersey Adolescent 4 answered how being on her own helped her self-esteem. Additionally, because she had a sense of direction, she also felt better about herself.

I think that the ability to be on my own and self-direct in deciding what was important to me helped a lot with and self-esteem. Because I had more of a direction and I knew what my passions were, I kinda felt better about myself (Central New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Decision-Making

When asked how the community mentoring program influenced the decision-making of the adolescents enrolled, each of the directors explained how their program had had a positive influence. Terms such as acknowledge, conversations, and priorities were categorized under decision-making to show the influence the program has had on the adolescents. Program Director 1 for example, explained how his program is one of no judgment, where he empowers the adolescents to make decisions on situations presented to them.

I've had kids share some pretty difficult stuff with me. I try to maintain with the kids a position of non-judgment. I do sort of challenge them in terms of what are the effects of your decisions. I remember specifically, I've had more than one kid talk to me about a job that they have that they don't like, and we have these conversations where I say, "How's the job going?" It's just like, "Oh, I hate it. My boss is horrible." And I say, "Okay. And, uh, so what are you gonna do (Program Director 1)?"

Program Director 3 assumed her organization was having a positive influence on the adolescent's decision-making based on the evidence she had witnessed. This evidence was seen by changes in attitude and grades.

I'm hoping in the positive. We had a couple of kids that had bad a-... Not bad attitudes, but, like, "Are you talking to me?" Or, "What are you looking at me for?" And then little by little,

it starts-... We started to chip away at that exterior, that chip on their shoulder. Their grades have gotten better, so you know that their priorities are shifting. So I think that's a plus (Program Director 3).

Program Director 2 explained how decision-making was the cornerstone of his program, taking pride in making better decisions and acknowledging the bad.

That's a major, major focus on what we're doing. Thus the book, Make A Decision. We pride ourselves in the fact that they can make better decisions and they can acknowledge bad decisions, and be transparent with themselves (Program Director 2).

The data discovered by the program directors were reinforced by the responses in the adolescent in the focus groups. The trend in their responses were related to the responses given by the directors of the programs. North New Jersey Adolescent 4 mentioned how they were making better decisions in school which was helping improve their grades.

To be honest, I think it changed me a little bit. I'm doing better in school, and I make better decisions (North New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Central New Jersey Adolescent 3 explained how the program allowed her to follow her interests and brought more “clarity” to her decision-making process.

Follow your interest, and find your path., I used to be really afraid of saying no to things and I'm still afraid of saying no to things, but it's being worked on. I've started to say no to things that aren't aligned with what I feel is my passion and my purpose. I think learning how to prioritize your decision-making, choosing what you like, what you feel is on purpose in your life. I feel after like a year of doing the mentoring and now going into my second year, like, "I'm gonna say no to this, I'm gonna say yes to this." It's brought a lot more clarity to my decision-making process (Central New Jersey Adolescent 3).

South New Jersey Adolescent 2's response reinforced the response from Program Director 2 when he explained how he learned to remove negative behaviors that influenced his life.

I'd say getting rid of negative traits, and cutting out things that I know are bad for me (South New Jersey Adolescent 2).

A pattern did emerge by some of the adolescents who answered that their decision-making was not influenced since enrolling in the community mentoring program. North New Jersey Adolescent 6's response was representative of those who responded in the context of no influence was had.

Haven't changed at all (North New Jersey Adolescent 6).

One unexpected finding came from one adolescent in Central New Jersey who explained that the program had a negative influence on his ability to make decisions. It is worth noting that this was the only response from all the participants who expressed a negative influence.

I think for me, it's a more negative approach. I've lost a substantial amount of self-discipline, which is being worked on. Just that when there's no one drilling down your throat about doing certain things like it's not gonna get done in my case... in like a more positive light, there's something that I could work on here (Central New Jersey Adolescent 3).

Social Capital

Table 8 (below) represents the data discovered through the interviews with the program directors and the adolescent focus groups related to the community mentoring program's influence on adolescents' social capital

Table 8*Social Capital*

Codes	Categories	Sample Quotes
Community Jobs Connections Connecting Career Interests Opportunities	Networking	<p>Program Director 2: We just started our Soft Skills Matter, workshop series, which is a connection with the local chamber of commerce. All of the boys and girls participating in this that complete the eight-week course, we place them in jobs, through partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce... The goal is that they learn and can grow and increase their social capital.</p> <p>North New Jersey Adolescent 4: it's also helped me to be a bit more bold. in trying to reach out and make connections with people for potential opportunities with work. I've interacted with a lot of people who do woodworking professionally and I've asked most, if not all of them, um, if they were interested in interning or having an intern. I don't think I would have been confident enough or interested enough to be able to ask questions directly like that without support from my mentor in this program.</p>
Programs Resources Opportunities Colleges Careers	Social Mobility	<p>Program Director 3: We do a program called Careers and I ask the kids, "Okay. What do you wanna do when you grow up?" One wants to be a fireman, one wants to be a policeman, one wants to be a soccer player, okay? The fireman, the policeman, I bring them in to talk to the kids. They just sit there and they're so enamored by it.</p> <p>South New Jersey Adolescent 2: I've gotten a lot of opportunities through this. I got a scholarship. My two years free at Roman College, and that was really cool, just looking at different departments and all that...</p>

Networking

Under the theme of social capital, networking was one of the categories that emerged from the program directors and influenced the adolescents within the community mentoring program. Terms from the directors and adolescents that came directly from the transcripts were used to support the trends that were discovered during the study. Program Director 1 discussed

networking within the community and bringing the adolescents to places of employment to expose them to a career they may be interested in.

We're always talking to the kids about connecting with people in the community. We connect kids who are into animals and we bring them to the local animal sanctuary if they want to take care of animals. If they're into furniture making, we try to find someone in the community who makes furniture that they can get connected with. We're always trying to get people in different internships as well as, we go on trips that are very much led by their interests (Program Director 1).

While Program Director 1 explained how he brought adolescents into the community, he further elaborated how decisions to pursue their goals were ultimately their own, reinforcing the decision-making skill that was discussed earlier in the chapter.

I do think that the habit that we're trying to form here with the kids is to help them practice getting stuff done and doing stuff for themselves and knowing that if they want something in their life then there are ways, to get it, but that they, they are ultimately responsible for themselves (Program Director 1).

Program Director 2 explained how his program offered networking based on the age of the adolescent.

The lower level for the kids social capital is really with coaches, with the little league, and then when they do make it to high school, the high school coaches...The middle and the high school level is that each young person that joins the program, we have a connection with the East Orange and Orange Police Departments, that allow our kids to get IDs that mention that they are a part of the police department is part of what we do (Program Director 2).

Additionally, Program Director 2 explained how they offered a Soft Skills Workshop that helped adolescents who enrolled in the program network and build upon their social capital.

We just started our Soft Skills Matter workshop series, which is a connection with the local chamber of commerce. All of the boys and girls participating in this, that complete the eight-week course, we place them in jobs through partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce... The goal is that they learn and can grow and increase their social capital (Program Director 2).

Program Director 3 explained how her organization organized a program entitled Careers, where they asked adolescents what they wanted to do when they grow older and then bring people in from that field to talk with the adolescents about it. While Program Director 3 does not use the exact terms used by Program Director 1 and Program Director 2, her answer is similar to the programs by the other two programs.

We do a program called Careers and I ask the kids, " What do you wanna do when you grow up?" One wants to be a fireman, one wants to be a policeman, and one wants to be a soccer player. The fireman, the policeman, I bring them in to talk to the kids, and they sit there and just look at 'em. They're, like, so enamored by it (Program Director 3).

When asked how the community mentoring program have influenced their social capital to the adolescent focus group, many of them responded that it had helped them connect to career fields they are interested in. Terms such as connections and opportunities appeared multiple times throughout the focus group conversations.

Central New Jersey Adolescent 2 explained how her mentoring program has provided her with resources and connections to help pursue her interests.

I'll say that the mentorship program definitely has helped me make connections and provided me with the resources that have taken me onto the path that I wanna pursue for the rest of my life (Central new Jersey Adolescent 2).

Central New Jersey Adolescent 6, while younger in age compared to the other participants, was able to explain how even though she currently does not feel the networking influence, she did see how it would influence her later on while in the program by helping her make connections.

I think it's helpful because he (the mentor) even though he hasn't introduced me to anyone yet, I did mention, "Hey, I want to know about pottery around here." And he's like, "Oh, there's a place. We can introduce you to the like studio and see what you wanna do there." So if I did in the future want to make connections with people, I definitely think that my mentor would help me achieve that (Central New Jersey Adolescent 6).

North New Jersey Adolescent 2 explained how the program connections could help provide him with new opportunities in their life that could have a positive influence.

I feel like it'd be, like, having networking, like the people at the fraternity Because they said for the summer jobs we're doing, they give a scholarship. I feel like that's an example of networking. We know people who will help us get further in life, give us opportunities and stuff like that (North New Jersey Adolescent 2).

Central New Jersey Adolescent 4 explained how the program has helped her become more confident in networking with people in the field of woodworking.

It's also helped me to be a bit more bold in trying to reach out and make connections with people for potential opportunities with work. I've interacted with a lot of people who do

woodworking professionally. And I've asked most, if not all of them if they were interested in interning or having an intern (Central New Jersey Adolescent 4).

Some of the participants explained how the program has had no influence on their social capital due to their age. South New Jersey Adolescent 5, an adolescent in their early teens, explained how even though they did have opportunities to visit new locations, they did not feel their social capital was influenced. South New Jersey Adolescent 5's response was representative of those with similar responses.

So I've had a lot of opportunities to like go places with them but like none of them has like really affected me or anything (South New Jersey Adolescent 5).

Additionally, a trend did emerge among the younger adolescents where they stated they had nothing to contribute to the questions being asked.

I have nothing to contribute (Central New Jersey Adolescent 6).

Nothing (North New Jersey Adolescent 6)

Social Mobility

The final category that emerged from the research on how community mentoring programs influence an adolescent's social capital was social mobility. In their own way, each of the three program directors explained how their organization influenced an adolescents' social mobility. Their responses showed a trend that is similar to the responses provided by the adolescents during the focus group interviews. Program Director 1 explained how his program not only facilitated assisting adolescents in networking with individuals in their career interests but also promoted self-advocacy to achieve their future goals.

I do think, that the habit that we're trying to form here with the kids is to help them practice getting stuff done and doing stuff for themselves and knowing that if they, if they want something in their life, then there's ways to get it...The sort of mindset that they develop over the course of their three, four, five years with us is that this is what I want in my life or if this is what I want in my life, there are ways to figure out how to, how to get it done. And they practice it with us (Program Director 1).

Program Director 2 explained how his program had a relationship with the military, which participated in career development activities with adolescents.

We have a relationship with our local recruiter in the Air Force, the Army, and the Navy. We haven't got with the Marines yet, but all three participate in our career development activities, and those connections are made to help them make the next move to wherever it is that they plan to go in their careers (Program Director 2).

Program Director 3 explained how the success of adolescents achieving their personal goals in her program was a dual process venture, requiring the mentor and adolescent to believe in each other.

It's a dual process. The mentor has to believe in it, and the member has to believe in it. The mentee has to believe in it. Once you have that, then you have success. But if it's only one way, it's not gonna happen. And that's what we try to do, we try to instill in the kids, "Look, this is what you need. It might not necessarily be what you want, but this is what you need (Program Director 3).

When comparing the responses from the program directors, responses provided by adolescents in the focus groups explained how the program they were enrolled in had influenced their social mobility in a positive direction.

North New Jersey Adolescent 3 mentioned how his program has been assisting him in applying for the colleges he wants to attend after high school.

The program is helping us get jobs and scholarships for college (North New Jersey Adolescent 3).

North New Jersey Adolescent 4 mentions how the community mentorship program he is enrolled in has helped him pursue the college of his choice.

It's helped me, 'cause in the college I been wanting to go to, it's North Carolina A&T (North New Jersey Adolescent 4)

Central New Jersey Adolescent 3 elaborated how she now has access to people she did not have before.

So I'm beginning to get recommendations from my mentor about different people who could give you different introductions into it without me even asking. They just are like, "Oh, would you wanna meet with this guy at one o'clock?" I didn't even know that was something they had access to. I didn't know they knew so many people, to be honest (Central New Jersey Adolescent 3).

South New Jersey Adolescents 2 and 3 explained how they received many resources and opportunities that had influenced their social mobility thanks to the mentoring program. South New Jersey Adolescents 2 mentioned how she visited colleges and received scholarships thanks to the program.

I got a scholarship. My two years free at Roman College. And that was really cool, just looking at different departments and all that. And I actually went to Virginia Tech to see a basketball game and view the campus a little bit with a couple of other teams playing last week

or so. A lot of different things. Positive. All positive... the different opportunities I have been able to reach a lot of my goals. Or I've had time to plan a lot of my goals and they seem pretty stable right now, so yeah (South New Jersey Adolescent 2).

Summary

The individual interviews with the Program Directors and adolescent focus groups found that community-based mentoring programs could influence an adolescent's social competence and capital in various ways. While each community-based mentoring program was located in a different region in NJ, all were able to provide data that contributed to the findings of the study. The transcripts from the individual interviews with the program directors and adolescent focus groups led to the themes that were discussed in the chapter. It was also discovered that the findings related to social capital differed among different age groups who participated in the study. Chapter V summarizes the research findings and the implications community-based mentoring programs have on adolescent social capital and social competence.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aimed to identify community-based mentoring programs' influence on an adolescent's social capital and social competence. As stated in Chapter I, community mentoring programs can improve social competence and increase social capital by introducing new connections to the enrolled adolescents (Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012). Chapter I defined community-based mentoring as where an adult spends time with a younger person to support their needs and provide guidance outside the school setting and not directly associated with the district (Axford et al., 2021). This chapter includes findings from individual interviews with three program directors and three adolescent focus groups from three different community mentoring programs across the state of New Jersey that will add to the existing literature about this topic. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas of future research, and a summary.

This chapter contains findings and future research opportunities to help answer the research question: How do community-based mentoring programs influence adolescents' social competence and social capital?

The findings on how community mentoring programs influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence consist of the following categories: (a) social life, (b) self-awareness, (c) decision-making, (d) network, and (e) social mobility. The categories were developed from the exact wording of the participants. Other findings from the study revealed the themes of adolescent enrollment and mentorship framework, which indicated why the adolescents enrolled, their perception upon enrolling, and their experience. Some categories have a greater representation of some of the adolescents who participated, which will be discussed

later in the chapter. All the categories contribute to the findings that examine how community-based mentoring programs influence adolescents' social competence and social capital.

Interpreting the Findings

While the influence of the community-based mentoring program may vary for each adolescent participant, the categories identified throughout the study were consistent with the responses from the program directors and adolescents. Each category is explained in detail in the following sections throughout the chapter.

Adolescent Enrollment and Mentorship Framework

Conclusion

Participants who enrolled in a community-based mentoring program did so because of personal issues or parental/guardian influence.

Adolescent Enrollment Perception

The study revealed two findings suggesting why adolescents enroll in their respective programs. The *first* finding indicated that the adolescents were enrolling for personal reasons, such as mental health or looking to make friends. The *second* reason was that their parents/guardians enrolled them. These findings were derived from terms from the participants which were taken directly from the transcripts. A pattern of responses from program directors and adolescents suggested that adolescents did not know what to expect upon entering the program. Other adolescents suggested that they were annoyed about attending the program. Over time, the adolescents explained how they became comfortable attending the mentoring program, with some going so far as to say they formed friendly, trusting, and supportive relationships with their mentor. The relationships that were formed in the program for this study support Pryce and Keller's (2012) study, which indicated that when a relationship is formed over an extended

period between the mentor and adolescent, there is a potential to see a more significant influence on the adolescent. This research also supports Coller and Kuo's (2013) study, where they explained that two of the factors that promote successful mentorship include building trust and friendship.

Conclusion

The study revealed that community-based mentoring programs that emphasized respect tended to create a more positive experience for the adolescents enrolled.

Mentoring Framework

Social Learning Theory emphasizes observational learning, where individuals repeat desired responses, instruct others to repeat the behavior, and prompt them when they fail, which may produce a matching response in most people (Bandura, 1977). Conducting the study through the lens of Social Learning Theory, the program directors explained how they want their mentors to display empathy, support, honesty, and caring and listen to the adolescents, with listener being most repeatedly. The most common term used to describe the characteristics the adolescents were looking for were respectful, with fairness, nice, equal, and trust also being mentioned. When the mentors displayed behavior of listening, the adolescents felt more comfortable being open with their adult counterparts. One adolescent explained how his relationship with his mentor was more meaningful than with his teachers by explaining how the mentors in his program showed genuine interest in his needs, while the relationship with his teachers tended to feel more transactional. The adolescent's use of the word transactional, who was one of the older participants in this study, was taken directly from the transcripts, which painted a clear image of the different relationship he has with his teachers to that of his mentor. These results support the Aguayo et al. (2022) study, which reported how adolescents with mentoring relationships other

than their family are more likely to have higher self-esteem, higher levels of hope, life satisfaction, and motivation to succeed.

Social Justice Mentoring

The research also examined the programs' mentoring framework regarding their social justice mentoring practices by examining the influence the cultural background has on the adolescents. As stated in Chapter I, social justice mentoring requires one to continually reflect, change, and evaluate one's practice in an effort to create transformative spaces for people to harness their potential (Neville, 2015). According to DuBois and Karcher (2013), a mentor who is more relatable to the demographics of the adolescent can form a more trusting relationship in the program. The response from South New Jersey Participant 2 supported DuBois and Karcher's research when she explained how she felt a connection and could better talk to her mentor because she was of a similar background, which she was not accustomed to at her school district.

Garray and Pistrang's (2010) study found that black male adolescents felt that being with black male mentors allowed for greater mutual identification over shared experiences and interests. Moreover, DuBois and Karcher (2013) elaborated in their findings how mentoring programs that employ social justice practices in their pairing, such as pairing youth of color with a mentor of color, the positive feeling about one's race or culture can increase. Program Director 2 also emphasized the importance of being culturally responsive when the situation arises, which counters the research above. He further explained how his organization practiced code-switching, which he described as the ability to adapt to the culture you are in at that moment. The practice of code-switching mentioned by Program Director 2 appeared to be supported, given the pattern of responses provided by the adolescents in his program. Additionally, a common pattern

of responses from all the focus groups revealed that the cultural background of the mentor would have no influence on their experience in their program, which refutes DuBois and Karcher's (2013) study.

Social Competence Findings

Conclusion

Community mentoring programs could influence adolescents' social life, self-awareness, and decision-making.

Community Mentoring Programs' Influence on Adolescent Social Life

The study discovered that the community mentoring programs the adolescents enrolled in influenced their social lives. Defined by the American Psychological Association (2023), one of the descriptors of social competence is an individual's ability to select appropriate social behaviors given the proper context. Each program director explained how their programs had influenced the adolescents' social lives, which included terms such as socialization and people. Additionally, responses from the adolescents included phrases such as being less shy and able to make more friends, which was a common finding throughout the individual focus group interviews. These terms provided by the program directors and adolescent focus groups were from the transcripts, supporting the social life category. Their responses support Barry et al. (2018), who defined social and emotional skills as an individual having an integrated set of affective, cognitive, and behavioral competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Additionally, a surprising detail emerged through some of the responses about how they felt more comfortable being on their own instead of constantly being out with their friends. They explained that by attending the mentoring program and working with their mentor, they no

longer wanted to always be out of the house and could be comfortable with being around family instead.

Community-Based Mentoring Programs' Influence on Adolescent Self-Awareness

Self-awareness was one of the categories discovered as an influence the adolescents experienced while enrolled in their community mentoring program. Erdem et al. (2016) found that mentoring programs can help adolescents with emotional and social competence. Chan et al. (2016) explained how mentors modeling desired behavior and interactions helped adolescents better express and regulate their behaviors. Through the individual interviews, each program director explained how they work with the adolescents to be more self-aware, whether that would be situational, emotional, or social. Whether through a specific exercise or casual conversation, the program directors made it clear the importance of working on an adolescent's social competence, which is supported by Erdem et al.

Additionally, a common response among many of the adolescents expressed that the program they were enrolled in was having an influence. Being able to perceive their surroundings, and adapting to situations were some phrases used by some of the adolescents to explain the influence the community mentoring program has had on them. The mentors in the programs were able to work with the adolescents on these skills, and the common response from the adolescents was that it had a positive influence on them, which further supports the research by Erdem et al. (2016), who found that mentoring programs could influence an adolescent's social competence.

Community Mentoring Programs' Influence on Adolescent Decision-Making

Part of the definition of social competence is for an individual to determine what is expected in a situation and to select social behaviors that are appropriate for the given context

(Psychology, 2023). The responses given by the program directors and adolescents discovered that adolescent decision-making was influenced. As a major focus of each program, the program directors implemented conversations and role-playing exercises where they explained how their specific programs were influencing the adolescent's decision-making. Their responses support the Erdem et al. (2016) study that found that mentoring adolescents on specific developmental assets could positively support emotional and social competence. Additionally, statements from the adolescents from the three mentoring programs were that they felt their decision-making was influenced since enrolling in the program, supporting Erdem et al.'s findings. Working with their mentors, they expressed how they could prioritize better, make better decisions in school, and "get rid of negative traits".

It is worth noting that not all responses had a positive influence, which countered the Erdem et al. study. Some adolescents who participated in the study answered that the programs did not influence their decision-making abilities or that it had not changed. Additionally, one adolescent, through his response, elaborated that his decision-making abilities were negatively influenced, stressing that this was a skill he was working on within the program.

Social Capital Findings

Conclusion

Community mentoring programs may influence an adolescent's social network and ability to make connections in prospective career/educational paths.

Community Mentoring Programs' Influence on Adolescents Network

Chapter II mentions that Social Capital Theory (Coleman,1990) is the idea that an individual's social relationships can influence personal development. Fabiansson (2015) also

explains how social capital can come from different sources, such as mentorship programs. The findings from this study suggest that the influence of social capital adolescents experience within the community mentoring program was networking. The program directors utilized their connections within their communities to expose the adolescents to opportunities that adolescents expressed they may not have had access to. This matches the study conducted by Dill and Ozer (2019), who indicated how network-based social capital was defined as community members' access to their leverage resources with the institutions and organizations for their individual or collective action. The programs were supported by Sheir et al.'s (2018) research, where they found that community mentoring programs helped develop social capital for adolescents. Mentoring programs could assist adolescents with making connections with professionals when normally they may not be able to make them on their own. A common trend among the adolescents expressed similar responses that supports the study by Sheir et al. and Dill and Dozer.

Dill and Ozer's (2019) study of how one mentor used their social network to identify scholarships that influenced an adolescent's social mobility. Dill and Ozer explained how social capital could develop when social relationships are formed, which refers to leveraging networks to help people in their upward social mobility. These community mentoring programs support Dill and Ozer's study by providing resources and connections for adolescents, such as bringing in a police officer to their program.

There was a trend among the non-working age adolescent participants, that explained that they were not influenced from the networking category within the programs. While these responses refuted Sheir et al (2018) study, it was worth noting that they were not of the age to be actively thinking about networking.

Community Mentoring Programs' Influence on Adolescents Social Mobility

In their study, Allen and Ebay (2011) explained how mentorship can provide a wide range of support and networks to help adolescents achieve their goals. Additionally, Sheir et al. (2018) conducted a study where they discovered that mentorship programs provided adolescents with different forms of social capital that could assist them in reaching their fullest potential. When comparing existing research to this current study, each program director had their own approach on how their organization influences an adolescent's social mobility. Their responses showed how their programs offered resources, opportunities, both in college sector and careers, that could possibly influence their social mobility. Their responses supported the outcome by the Thomas et al. (2016) study, where they found that mentors tend to be in a better position to provide resources and support that can influence access to social capital. The responses from the adolescents supported the responses from the program directors and the research stated above. A common trend among the older adolescents was how the mentoring programs provided them opportunities that they may not have had access to before. Scholarships, careers, and connections were some of the benefits the adolescents expressed.

As stated earlier, there was a trend of responses from the younger adolescent participants who responded that they had nothing to add to this discussion topic.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study was some of the adolescents wanted to stop participating towards the middle of the focus group session. More from the younger adolescents, as they were becoming uninterested in answering questions related to social capital, resulting in a common “nothing” response. Field notes and observations included adolescents being on their cell phones, interrupting and talking over others in the room, and verbally asking when the

questions would conclude. It is possible the reason for this was due to the nature of the questions being asked. Because the younger participants were of non-working age, they may not have been thinking of social capital in terms of looking for work or how the program will influence them later in life.

The possibility of bias in the responses by the program directors and adolescents participating needs to be considered. Bias from the program directors could have been present during the interviews to make their program out to be a more positive experience than what it was. Bias responses from the adolescents participating must also be considered due to not knowing the researcher. With questions about the influence they experienced in the program, the adolescents may have answered what the researcher wanted to hear and not what was trying to be discovered.

One limitation that was worth noting was the consistency of the interviewing format with the program directors. The first two program directors requested to do the individual interviews via Zoom while the third program director opted for in person. While an effort was made to be consistent with the format for all the directors, the third program director politely insisted we do the interview in person. Even though the third program director did not display any difference in behavior or responses from the other two, it would have been more beneficial to be uniformed throughout the process to have consistent data collection.

Delimitations

The researcher excluded interviewing individual mentors from the community-based mentoring programs while opting to interview the program directors instead. The program directors were decided over the individual mentors because it was the directors who oversaw the

mentoring organization, and it was the responsibility of the mentors to enact the policy the program directors wanted.

While other organizations within the community could also offer mentoring to adolescents, this study focused specifically on community-based mentoring programs. Organizations that may offer mentoring services, such as religious institutions, may also provide other programs, thus possibly limiting the influence mentoring experience. By focusing on community-based mentoring programs, the researcher was able to solely focus on organizations whose primary goal is to assist adolescents through the assistance of a mentoring adult.

Recommendations for Further Research

The current research discovered that community-based mentoring programs can influence an adolescent's social competence and social capital. To gain a deeper understanding of the explored topic, further research is recommended to best assist adolescents who enroll in community mentoring programs. Areas of further research that can provide a deeper understanding of the topic could include expanding from only community mentoring programs in New Jersey to nationwide, further exploration of social justice mentoring, and social capital influence among different adolescent age groups.

The study revealed that community-based mentoring programs could influence an adolescent's social competence and social capital in three regions of New Jersey. It is worth exploring whether other programs across the country yield the same results? If they do not, it is worth exploring why and if those results can be utilized in other community mentoring programs to improve the mentoring experiences within local communities.

Other responses from the adolescents differed from the research regarding social justice mentoring and its influence. Adolescents expressed that if they felt respected by their mentor, the

cultural background made no difference in their pairing. Research shows that social justice mentoring considerations has the ability to influence the adolescent's experience. It would be beneficial to research culturally responsive mentoring and whether the results from this study are an isolated response or more of a common trend across other programs.

Lastly, research could be conducted to examine the influence of social capital among the different age groups who participated in the study. While this study provided evidence on how the mentoring program influences an adolescent's social capital, younger participants tended to provide a response of nothing. These adolescents ranged from 15 and younger. Only allowing working or college-age adolescents in future studies could yield more significant results on the program's influence on social capital because this age group would be closer to the early stages of their post-high-school career.

Recommendations for Community-Based Mentoring Programs

Interviewing the program directors from each center and adolescent focus groups found that each center had its own methods for operating its programs. Based on the research findings, the following is recommended for community mentoring programs.

When developing a community mentoring program, it is recommended that the mentors act in the interests of the adolescents and not their own. While this may seem like an obvious trait to enact, a common theme from the adolescents mentioned that they wanted a mentor who looks out for their needs and shows them support. This was especially true with one adolescent answering how their relationship with their teachers felt more transactional than supportive, which was a direct reference taken from the transcript. Ensuring that mentors work for the interest of the adolescent could help adolescents form closer bonds with their mentors, which could further influence their mentoring experience.

A formal pairing between the mentor and adolescent could benefit the adolescent's mentorship experience. As mentioned in Chapter I, Spencer et al. (2019) found that the pairing between the mentor and adolescent could influence the experience the adolescent receives. Learning about the adolescents' backgrounds before their start date and pairing them with a mentor who can best connect with them could create a more meaningful experience.

A common theme from all the community mentoring programs was utilizing their resources and connections. Allen & Eby (2011) found that mentorships have the ability to provide a wide range of social support and networks that could help the adolescent reach their goals. If a mentorship program utilizes their resources and connections, they have the potential to provide greater opportunities to support the needs of the adolescents enrolled.

Conclusion

This study aimed to understand how community mentoring programs influence adolescents' social competence and social capital. Through individual interviews with program directors and adolescent focus groups across New Jersey, the data revealed how the programs influenced adolescents in these categories and how it was accomplished. The partnership between the community and the community mentoring program exposed the adolescents to new networking opportunities, which allowed them to learn and pursue opportunities that could possibly influence their social mobility once they left high school. The programs worked on an individual's social competence, which influenced the adolescents' self-awareness, decision-making, and social life. While more research is recommended to expand on the influence community-based mentoring programs have on adolescents, the evidence from this study was able to add to existing research and reinforce the benefits community-based mentoring programs have in our society.

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Appendix A

Adolescent Consent Form

William Paterson University

Project Title: Community-Based Mentoring Programs: Influence on Adolescents' Social Capital and Social Competence

Principal Investigator: William Felegi

Other Investigators: N/A

Faculty Sponsor: Geraldine Mongillo, PhD

Faculty Sponsor Phone Number: 973-720-3139

Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies

Course Name and Number: _____

Protocol Approval Date: _____

I have been asked to participate in a research study on mentorship programs and how they influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. The purpose of this study will be to determine how community-based mentoring programs influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. I understand that I will be asked questions related to my participation in the community mentorship program and its influence. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and I may end my participation in this research at any time.

Risks associated with my completing this focus group interview may be stress and anxiety due to answering the questions and I accept them. Benefits of my participation in this study can lead to a better understanding of how community-based mentoring programs can influence an adolescent, and I accept them.

I understand that any data and video recordings collected as part of this study will be stored in a safe and secure location, and that this data will be destroyed when this research is completed. I understand that I will be audio-recorded and video-recorded and that these recordings will be destroyed once the research and doctoral program is completed.

I understand that, as a participant in a focus group, I will not reveal what any of the other members of the group said or did during the focus group session.

I understand that my identity will be protected at all times and that my name will not be used without my separate written permission. I understand that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify individual participants.

I understand that by providing consent for this study I am also providing consent for my anonymized responses to be included in datasets that may be used in the future the investigator of this study or other investigators for research related to the purpose of this research study.

If I have questions about this study, I may call the investigator, William Felegi, or the other individuals listed in the heading of this document. If I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the conduct of the investigators, or my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-720-2852 or by email to IRBAdministrator@wpunj.edu.

By signing this consent form, I am agreeing to participate in this research study.

Name of Subject _____

Signature of Subject _____

Date: _____

Name of Investigator _____

Signature of Investigator _____

Date: _____

Name of Witness _____

Signature of Witness _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

William Paterson University

Project Title: Community-Based Mentoring Programs: Influence on Adolescents' Social Capital and Social Competence

Principal Investigator: William Felegi

Other Investigators: N/A

Faculty Sponsor: Geraldine Mongillo, PhD

Faculty Sponsor Phone Number: 973-720-3139

Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies

Course Name and Number: _____

Protocol Approval Date: _____

Your child has been asked to participate in a research study on mentorship programs and how they influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. The purpose of this study will be to determine how community-based mentoring programs influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. Their participation is entirely voluntary, and they may end their participation in this research at any time.

Risks associated with my completing this focus group interview may be stress and anxiety due to answering the questions and I accept them. Benefits of my participation in this study can lead to a better understanding of how community-based mentoring programs can influence adolescents, and I accept them.

Any data and video recordings collected as part of this study will be stored in a safe and secure location, and that this data will be destroyed when this research is completed. I understand that I will be audio-recorded and video-recorded and that these recordings will be destroyed once the research and doctoral program is completed.

I understand that, as a parent/guardian of a participant in the focus group, I will not reveal what any of the other members of the group said or did during the focus group session.

I understand that their identity will be protected at all times and that my child's will not be used without my separate written permission. I understand that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify individual participants.

I understand that by providing consent for this study I am also providing consent for my child's anonymized responses to be included in datasets that may be used in the future by the investigator of this study or other investigators for research related to the purpose of this research study.

If I have questions about this study, I may call the investigator, William Felegi, or the other individuals listed in the heading of this document. If I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the conduct of the investigators, or my rights as a research subject, I

may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-720-2852 or by email to IRBAdministrator@wpunj.edu.

By signing this consent form, I am agreeing to my child's participation in this research study.

Name of Investigator: _____

Signature of Investigator _____

Date: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Witness _____

Date: _____

Program Director Consent Form

William Paterson University

Project Title: Community-Based Mentoring Programs: Influence on Adolescents' Social Capital and Social Competence

Principal Investigator: William Felegi

Other Investigators: N/A

Faculty Sponsor: Geraldine Mongillo, PhD

Faculty Sponsor Phone Number: 973-720-3139

Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies

Course Name and Number: _____

Protocol Approval Date: _____

As a director for the mentorship program, I have been asked to participate in a research study on mentorship programs and how they influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. The purpose of this study will be to determine if mentorship programs influence an adolescent's social capital and social competence. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and I may end my participation in this research at any time.

Risks associated with my completing this interview may be stress and anxiety due to answering the questions and I accept them. Benefits of my participation in this study can lead to a better understanding of how mentorship programs can influence an adolescent's social capital and competency, and I accept them.

I understand that any data and video recordings collected as part of this study will be stored in a safe and secure location, and that this data will be destroyed when this research is completed. I understand that I will be audio-recorded and video-recorded and that these recordings will be destroyed once the research and doctoral program is completed.

I understand that my identity will be protected at all times and that my name will not be used without my separate written permission. I understand that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify my participation in the study.

I understand that by providing consent for this study I am also providing consent for my anonymized responses to be included in datasets that may be used in the future the investigator of this study or other investigators for research related to the purpose of this research study.

If I have questions about this study, I may call the investigator, William Felegi, or the other individuals listed in the heading of this document. If I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the conduct of the investigators, or my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-720-2852 or by email to IRBAdministrator@wpunj.edu.

Name of Investigator: _____

Signature of Investigator _____

Date: _____

Name of Program Director: _____

Signature of Witness _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Adolescent Questions:

Adolescent Perception of the Mentor Relationship and Responsibilities

1. What made you want to join the community mentorship program?
2. What characteristics make a good mentor?
3. Describe the relationship you formed with your mentor within the community mentorship program.
4. Has the cultural background of your mentor influenced your experience in the program?
If so, can you describe how the cultural background of your mentor influenced your experience in the program?

Community Mentorship Enrollment Perception

5. What was your perception of the community mentorship program before you enrolled? During? After?

Social Competence Influence

6. Social Competence is defined by the American Psychological Association (2023) the ability to evaluate social situations and determine what is expected or required; to recognize the feelings and intentions of others; and to select social behaviors that are most appropriate for that given context. How has the community mentorship program influenced your self-perception? Self-esteem? Self-competence?
7. Has the community mentorship program influenced your social life? If so, can you describe how it has influenced your social life?
8. Has the community mentorship program influenced how you make-decisions?

Social Capital Influence

9. For this study, social capital is defined as networks and connections between individuals that can provide support and resources. Example: Using social network to help an adolescent make a connection for a job once they leave school. How has the community mentorship program build your social capital?
10. Do you feel the mentor and mentorship program has set you on a path and helped you make connections that will help you achieve your personal goals? Why or why not?

Conclusion

11. Is there anything you may want to add that you added to the discussion?

Program Director Questions**Adolescent Perception of the Mentor Relationship and Responsibilities**

1. What makes adolescents want to enroll in this community mentorship program?
2. What characteristics make a good mentor?
3. How are the mentor and adolescents paired?
4. Has the cultural background of the mentor influenced the experience of the adolescent enrolled? If so, can you describe how the cultural background of the mentor influenced the experience of the adolescent enrolled?
5. Describe the relationship adolescent's form with their mentors.

Community Mentorship Enrollment Perception

6. What was the adolescent's perception of the community mentorship program before they enrolled? During? After?

Social Competence Influence

7. Social Competence is defined by the American Psychological Association (2023) the ability to evaluate social situations and determine what is expected or required; to recognize the feelings and intentions of others; and to select social behaviors that are most appropriate for that given context. How has the community mentorship program influenced the adolescent's self-perception? Self-esteem? Self-competence?
8. Has the Community mentorship program influenced the adolescent's social life? If so, can you describe how it has influenced their social life?
9. Has the community mentorship program influenced how adolescents make decisions?

Social Capital Influence

10. For this study, social capital is defined as networks and connections between individuals that can provide support and resource. Example: Using social network to help an adolescent make a connection for a job once they leave school. How has the community mentorship program build social capital among the adolescents?
11. Do you feel the mentor and community mentorship program has set the adolescents on a path to help make connections that will help them achieve their personal goals? Why or why not?

Conclusion

12. Is there anything you may want to add that you added to the discussion?

VITA

William John Felegi

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