Assessing the Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs on At-Risk Youth

Charlotte Emilie Steppling

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ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS
ON AT-RISK YOUTH

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Center for Social and Public Policy
McAnulty College & Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Public Policy

By
Charlotte E. Steppling

May 2013
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Charlotte E. Steppling

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ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS
ON AT-RISK YOUTH

By
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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS
ON AT-RISK YOUTH

By
Charlotte E. Steppling
May 2013

Thesis supervised by Ann Marie Popp, Ph D.

As the number of at-risk students’ increases, challenges for teachers, administrators and policymakers increase too, including the need to develop productive programs to help reduce some of the negative outcomes to which at-risk youth are already predisposed. Mentoring programs offer opportunities for at-risk youth to socialize and learn in a safe environment that exposes them to other members of the community. This study explores some of the components that constitute “effective mentoring”, with regards to mentoring programs for at-risk youth. It compares two mentoring organizations, Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program using several of the benchmark criteria for effective mentoring programs set forth by the National Mentoring Partnership. It concludes with recommendations and suggested next steps on the federal, state and local levels toward enhancing current mentoring programs. The
findings include, that Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program meet the majority of the established benchmark criteria.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents, Patricia and Eric, who I consider my biggest role models. Thank you for your guidance, support, and tough love. Lastly, thank you for teaching me how to appreciate the little things life has to offer.

A special dedication to the youth of tomorrow. This body of work goes to providing more knowledge to the field of youth development and ensuring that we as a society are taking positive steps to provide positive futures for our next generation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The realization of this work was only possible due to the help and support from numerous individuals, to whom I desire to express my gratefulness.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Every child should be given the best opportunity to succeed in life, both professionally and personally. Critical to that success are the rights to receive a good education and to learn in a safe environment. Unfortunately, budgetary cuts throughout American school systems are further undermining our ability to support children in this way. This has resulted in fewer adults per child in schools (Dryfoos, 1998). In addition, ongoing changes in social, economic, and cultural conditions have dramatically increased youths’ vulnerability to undesirable outcomes, that have “negative consequences for [youths] future development as responsible, self-sufficient adults” (Dryfoos, 1998; Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012). So far identified as some of those consequences are “drug abuse, homelessness, delinquency, teenage parenthood, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and school dropout” (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012).

According to The Education Commission of the United States (“ECS”), an interstate compact organization created to help improve the quality of public education through forming partnerships between educational leaders and supporting progressive policy development, half of all American adolescents participate in some type of at-risk behavior which reduces their ability to be successful (Education Commission of the States, 2012). Nearly 18 million youth between the ages of 10 and 18, “live in situations that put them at risk of not living up to their potential” (MENTOR, 2005).

Given budget constraints and the ever-increasing inability to provide youth with the individual attention and support they need to succeed in school, negative outcomes are all too real. In the last decade, however, there has been enormous growth and interest
in youth mentoring programs; “fueled in part by the importance that positive relationships with extra familial adults” have on “promoting resiliency among youth from at-risk backgrounds” (DuBois, 2002).

At-risk youth mentoring programs come in different shapes and sizes but are generally borne of the idea of matching an “older” caring adult with a youth in order to provide guidance and support on a more individualized basis. Groups like the National Mentoring Partnership, a non-profit organization created more than twenty years ago, are becoming prominent in the mentoring community. The National Mentoring Partnership is known as a champion of mentoring programs, with the stated mission to help children by supporting nationwide mentoring programs through creating quality standards, tools, and usable research (www.mentoring.org). It has played a major role in influencing the growth of mentoring initiatives “at local, state, and national levels” (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). In fact, mentoring is on its way to becoming an influential intervention in American society, with an estimated three million youth participating in mentoring programs (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

This study compares two organizations that utilize mentoring as a critical key toward bettering the lives of at-risk youth. The two mentoring organizations compared are: Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program. Both mentoring programs recruit college students to mentor at-risk youth and help them develop skills for lifelong success (The DREAM Program; Strong Women Strong Girls).

**Purpose of the Study**

The National Mentoring Partnership recognizes that there are 18 million youth in need or who are interested in participating in mentoring, yet only “three million are in
formal, high-quality mentoring relationships” (MENTOR, 2013). This paper highlights the importance of research into youth mentoring programs as a way to help identify and assess their best practices and their strengths and weaknesses. By studying the effectiveness of youth mentoring organizations and analyzing whether and to what extent they are viable and feasible options for ongoing positive youth outcomes, I am able to draw conclusions that support the formulation of new policies and identify best practices that could be considered across the board. The existing knowledge base about the effectiveness of mentoring programs is not adequately robust for current needs. This study will provide additional timely and relevant information to practitioners, policy makers, and funders about whether mentoring at-risk youth is effective to help minimize negative life outcomes and it will assist with program development, funding and allocation decisions.

For youth programs to succeed, practitioners, policy makers, and funders must collaborate to deliver the best possible mentoring program and experience. The first step is to provide evidence that effective mentoring has its benefits and that those benefits typically outweigh actual or perceived weaknesses. Recognizing the capabilities of the youth mentoring programs in the community at-large and seeing the need for ongoing improvements will help raise awareness and assist mentoring programs to become even more relevant and effective.

**Research Design**

The design of this study is to compare two mentoring organizations to evaluate the overall effectiveness of their programs. I will be doing a content analysis of the organizational data to compare and contrast the two organizations to each other. In
addition, the National Mentoring Partnership has identified several operational standards for mentoring programs plus six evidence-based standards that “address six critical dimensions of mentoring program operations” (MENTOR, 2009). I will compare the two mentoring programs to several of those evidence-based standards in order to determine if they meet the benchmarks. My focus will be on: (1) program implementation including screening and training, and (2) identifying the outcomes produced from the mentor-mentee relationship. (MENTOR 2009).

As a result of this study, I will be able to identify several of the major strengths and weaknesses of each program. The specific aims of this study are to: (1) assess whether the two mentoring programs, The DREAM Program and Strong Women Strong Girls, meet the standards set by the National Mentoring Partnership; (2) compare and contrast the two mentoring programs to identify their effectiveness and their best practices and areas for improvement; and (3) create evidence-based policy and best practices recommendations geared toward enhancing mentoring programs for at-risk youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Need for Mentors

An estimated 8.5 million youth in the United States lack a caring adult relationship in their lives (Cavell, DuBois, Karcher, & Rhodes, 2009). Youth who do not have a “strong relationship with a caring adult while growing up are much more vulnerable to a host of difficulties” (Cavell et al., 2009). Early intervention through structured mentoring programming and relationships may be able to provide youth with the tools and support they need to deal with life’s adversities.
The need for mentoring programs stems from many different factors. The young people of today must deal with far more personal and societal pressures than any previous generations ("360 Youth Services," 2012; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Youth face various social, psychological, and physical demands throughout their adolescence (Be a Mentor Organization, 2006). Peer pressure, sexuality, substance abuse, child abuse, violence, depression, nutrition and health are only some of the many difficulties (Be a Mentor Organization, 2006).

According to DuBois and Karcher (2005), youth mentoring offers guidance or instruction intended to facilitate the mentee’s growth and development. At the same time that youth may be gaining positive outcomes, positive outcomes are also being experienced for the mentor and the community (MENTOR, 2009). Youth mentoring provides a consistent trusted relationship between an adult and youth (Allen & Eby, 2007). Mutual bonds are formed during the process of mentoring which aims to develop competence and character within the mentee. Allen and Eby (2007) found that many youth participating in mentoring “show healthy adjustment despite the environmental adversities” they are facing.

Systematized approaches to mentoring youth in the United States first began over a century ago in the juvenile court systems (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Youth mentoring has not only become a movement within communities but has gained the attention of government officials, who suggest that there may be a need for this particular type of programming. The federal funding that has been allocated to mentoring programs has “increased substantially as well, with annual congressional appropriations of $100 million since 2004” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008, Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012).
Although the focus of mentoring programs may differ in content and age group, the majority emphasize the relationship between at-risk disadvantaged youth and a caring individual (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). The impetus of researching mentoring programs is to understand whether this type of programming is productive in supporting a positive youth development in at-risk youth.

**Definition of Terms**

*At-Risk Youth*

The term “at-risk” varies in definition; some authorities say that all youth are born at-risk (Astroth, 1993). Others, such as youth expert and researcher Joy Dryfoos, identifies numerous factors that put youth at-risk and categorizes youth by risk factor (MENTOR, 2012). Youth who are considered at-risk are defined by the UN Habitat as “young people whose background places them ‘at-risk’ of future offending or victimization due to environmental, social, and family conditions” that affect their development and success in society (UN Habitat, 2003). As such, the term at-risk youth is generally used to describe children who are in need of additional support in order for them to have realistic chances at success in both academic and social settings (Keating et al., 2002).

Dryfoos and other researchers define at-risk youth as those who have one or more of the following characteristics: retention in grade level, poor attendance, behavioral problems, low socioeconomic status or poverty, violence, low achievement, substance abuse, or teenage pregnancy (Anderson Moore, 2006; MENTOR, 2012; National Center for School Engagement, 2012). According to Randall Grayson (2001), risk can be placed
on a continuum categorizing certain activities as minimal, remote, high, imminent, or at-risk behaviors.

Not only do these factors affect the youths’ childhood but further affects their future. During their adult years, at-risk youth are more likely to experience divorce, unemployment, physical and emotional problems, substance abuse, and criminal activity (Keating et al., 2002; Grayson, 2001). With regard to mentoring at-risk youth, researchers have found that:

Youth experiencing situations of environmental risk may be especially suitable candidates for mentoring as a preventative intervention because of a lack of positive adult support figures or role model in their daily lives (DuBois et al., 2002).

Mentoring programs can thus help eliminate some of the high cost of future societal expenses such as health care, welfare, and legal costs. The average cost of mentoring per child varies by mentoring program, but it can range from “$1,000 for a school-based mentoring program to $1,500 for a community-based mentoring program” (MENTOR, 2010).

The U.S Department of Justice, in particular the Office of Juvenile Justice, predicted that up to 15 million children would see benefits if they participated in a mentoring program (Keating et al., 2002). Mentoring may provide social support which can improve youth development and overall functioning (Keating et al., 2002). Mentoring will not eliminate all the difficulties youth face but may offer youth a positive impact (Keating et al., 2002). The comparatively low cost of providing effective mentoring
programs will therefore help prevent the need for social services and other costs in the future (Keating et al., 2002).

**Youth Mentoring**

Youth mentoring is an ongoing, consistent, structured relationship for a youth with a trusted individual, aimed at developing a positive impact on the mentee (Rhodes, 2002). Youth mentoring provides children and adolescents with caring relationships and a support system that may have been previously unavailable to them. The benefits of caring relationships can cause an increase in overall success for at-risk youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Youth who participate in mentoring programs experience numerous positive benefits (MENTOR, 2012). Regarding educational achievement, researchers have found that youth who are mentored have a better chance of continuing their education and are more motivated to go to school (Jekielek, Hair, Moore, & Scarupa, 2002). A Public/Private Ventures study of Big Brothers Big Sisters found that students who interacted with their mentors regularly are 52% less likely than their peers to skip school and 37% less likely to skip classes (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Mentors can help youth with their academics and improve their skills while helping to keep them motivated (MENTOR, 2012). Overall, youth mentoring provides positive development and growth through various curricula, activities, workshops, and relationships.

Mentoring programs are specifically geared to benefit youth and work to provide a positive development model for them. Along with that, the increase in the need for mentorship has produced an influx of new mentoring organizations. Half of these new organizations have been established in the past 15 years (Rhodes, 2001). Organizations
such as those I have chosen for this study, Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program, provide essential support for youth. Both of these organizations recruit college students to participate in mentoring services in underprivileged neighborhoods and school districts, demonstrating that while mentors are typically older than the mentees, there are almost unlimited pools of mentor candidates to support local and nationwide mentoring programs.

**Origins of Mentoring**

The term mentor dates at least as far back as the 8th Century B.C., appearing in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Before Odysseus’ journey, he asked his wise and trusted companion “Mentor” to look after and coach Telemachus, Odysseus’ son. In this scenario, mentoring was seen as a responsibility to look after and share knowledge with another person. “Mentor” served as a friend and companion, guiding Telemachus (Allen & Eby, 2007). Throughout history, mentoring has played a key role within cultural communities, families, and societies.

The origin of formal mentoring within the United States begins sometime in the 19th century. The influx of “industrialization, immigration, and urbanization” caused many “families and children [to] endure stressful circumstances” (Allen & Eby, 2007). These stressful circumstances were met with the movement known as the Friendly Visiting Movement, in which middle class volunteers reached out to these families to provide support and role modeling (Allen & Eby, 2007). The most well-known organization that began during this time period was Big Brothers, now known as Big Brother Big Sisters (Fernandes-Alacantra, 2012). Big Brother Big Sisters has been a model mentoring organization that has guided and energized many other mentoring
organizations to fulfill their missions. Many mentoring programs began due to; “single parenthood, residential mobility, and labor force participation” which resulted in youth having less exposure to their parents and more time alone (Allen & Eby, 2007).

As U.S. history shows, formal youth mentoring started due to the charitable will of volunteers and community members. Altruistic volunteerism remains the core foundation from which youth mentoring has developed and continues to grow today. Although programs differ greatly, from focusing on youth in the juvenile justice systems to group mentoring for afterschool programs, they all strive for positive youth development (Allen & Eby, 2007). Making sustainable and credible connections between adults and youth not only redirects the attention of the youth toward more positive actions but also involves the community through the commitment of all the parties involved: parents, school administrators, mentors, and mentees.

**Description of Mentoring Programs**

**Formal and Informal Mentoring**

There are two different types of mentoring that have been distinguished in the field. The first, natural mentoring, is described as “fundamentally open and varied; it can take the form of friendship, instruction, or coaching” (Flaxman, 1988). Informal mentoring is where the two participants find each other by accident or naturally rather than through a directed match. Informal mentoring does not involve a minimum time requirement and may not involve regular consistent contact between mentor and youth ("Mentoring Initiatives," 2000). Informal mentoring exists in the form of youth programs, athletics, religious youth groups, and tutoring. These activities may not include the supervision of an organization or program ("Mentoring Initiatives," 2000).
One advantage of informal mentoring relationships is that they develop as a natural match without the aid of a third party. This reflects the choices and the decisions of the mentor and mentee themselves. In addition, there is no limited time agreement on when to meet or how long the relationship will last; as a result this can lead to a lasting friendship. But there are challenges to informal mentoring relationships too. One challenge is that the mentor may not be adequately trained in the responsibility of being a mentor (Hutchins, 2002). Additionally, the mentee may not understand the “purpose and parameters of the mentoring relationship” (Hutchins, 2002).

The second type of mentoring, and the type I focused on in this study, is formal (or planned) mentoring. Formal mentors are adult volunteers who are matched with youth by third parties, such as mentoring program staff (Rhodes, 2002). This type of mentoring is usually defined as more organized and programmatic. Formal youth mentoring consists of structured programs provided to the community in addition to educational institutions. The formal structure stems from the configuration and management of volunteers and mentees rather than informal “involving naturally occurring sets of mentoring relationships” (Allen & Eby, 2007).

Formal mentoring is beneficial to youth in that it is a navigable program designed to create a prolonged stable relationship between the mentor and youth. Formal youth mentoring programs are being encouraged in urban, suburban and rural areas, “to ensure that the mentoring relationship is a socially positive experience” ("Mentoring Initiatives," 2000). Another benefit of formalized mentoring is that when done properly, it “counters the potential effects of harmful mentors and peer relationships” and promotes a positive bond with a caring adult ("Mentoring Initiatives," 2000). To do that, formal mentoring
programs screen and train their mentors in order to properly choose individuals who will provide guidance and a positive impact on youth (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).

**One-to-one and Group Mentoring**

Within formal mentoring there also are two categories: one-to-one mentoring and group mentoring. According to Lisa Foster (2001), one-to-one mentoring occurs when one mentor is matched with one mentee. Contrast that with group mentoring programs, where the program assigns one or more mentors to work with several mentees. The median ratio for group mentoring is one to four (Foster, 2001).

Group mentoring customarily operates in an afterschool setting with the support of the school and staff. A study administered by Herrera, researchers at Public/Private Ventures, and the National Mentoring Partnership found that group mentoring allows adolescents to open up, socialize, and gain relationships with their mentors and peers (Herrera, Vang, & Gale, 2002). Being in a group setting may “help youth better understand social processes and give them a safe context in which to develop their social skills” (Rhodes, 2002). In addition, group mentoring may strengthen relationships with teachers and parents as the youth enhance their skills in communication.

On the other hand, group mentoring is not always ideal. Some youth who participated in group mentoring felt more distant relationship with their mentors than youth who participated in one-to-one mentoring (Rhodes, 2002). In addition, group mentoring that focuses around an academic schedule often does not involve mentoring during the summer months. This lack of consistency may cause some problems and instability for youth (Rhodes, 2002). Based on the benefits and possible downsides, it has been suggested that individual, one-to-one mentoring may be best for developing
relationships between mentoring pairs, while a group mentoring approach may be optimal for promoting positive peer interactions (Lawrence, Levy, Martin, & Strother-Taylor, 2008).

Both Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program use a group mentoring approach and in that context, they are both focused on peer interactions. In addition to group mentoring, however, The DREAM Program also provides one-to-one mentoring opportunities throughout their programming to address situations where the direct attention is considered more beneficial. Both mentoring organizations are further explored throughout this paper.

**Program Design and Effectiveness**

**Population Served and Youth Characteristics**

Different mentoring organizations reach out to a variety of different populations. Organizations serve various genders, age groups, and ethnicities. Each individual organization, however, tends to focus their attention and tailor their programming to a specific age group and target population that the organization is designed to serve (MENTOR, 2005). Many programs target youth from low income communities who show signs of academic difficulty and increased behavioral problems (Johnson, 1997). Some serve age groups ranging from as young as kindergarten to all the way through high school, with the targeted age being defined by the particular program’s objectives. Programs whose goal is to address behavioral and self-esteem issues before they occur generally target the youngest population of youth and tend to serve elementary and middle school aged youth. Other programs whose goal is to prepare youth for their future primarily serve students in high school (Johnson, 1997).
In addition, some organizations focus solely on serving one gender, such as Strong Women Strong Girls, an organization that pairs college women as mentors to elementary school girls (SWSG, 2013). Similarly, Boys to Men, a community based mentoring program, focuses specifically on serving middle school and high school boys (www.boystomen.org).

**Services Provided and Program Implementation**

Each youth mentoring organization is unique and can provide different services. While some organizational missions focus on improving overall academic achievements, other missions focus on providing support during times of personal or social stress by offering guidance for decision making (Dennis, 1993). Additionally, some missions focus on self-awareness and increasing youths’ ties to their community and school.

Mentoring programs can also have different overall outcome goals; some focus on educational achievements, while others focus on promoting positive youth development through social skill sets. From curricula to daily tasks and agenda, all aspects of mentoring programs will not be identical. These variations have caused much discussion in relation to which method and approach are most effective (DuBois et al., 2002).

**Relationship between Mentee and Mentor**

In order for positive results and outcomes to emerge it is critical that mentors are able to build strong, trusting relationships with their mentees. Trust relationships are built over a significant period of time and involve ongoing positive interaction (DuBois et al., 2002). Beneficial effects are only seen when “the mentor and youth spend time together on a consistent basis over some significant period of time” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).
When relationships are terminated early this can negatively affect youth (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

Similar to all interpersonal relationships, mentoring relationships are complex and dynamic. Mentors provide two different sources of support for youth: “instrumental support and psychosocial support” (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). Instrumental support has been described as support given to enhance the youth’s progress educationally or vocationally. Through instrumental support, the mentor acts as a coach, aiding and challenging the youth. On the other hand, psychosocial support is demonstrated through counseling, friendship, and acting as a role model for the youth.

While research shows that there have been some positive effects from these forms of support, there “is some evidence that mentoring can have unhealthy aspects” (Eby et al., 2000). Ragins and Scandura did a study in 1997 that found that cross gender mentoring could have negative effects on youth. Their study determined that cross gender mentoring produced “overprotection and paternalism by the mentor” (Ragins & Scandura, 1997). The study also concluded that there can be “sexual tension between the mentor and youth” (Ragins & Scandura, 1997). Additionally, poorly trained mentors who use inappropriate teaching methods can cause mentees to become frustrated or embarrassed (Eby et al., 2000).

Three other reasons that have been identified to suggest a negative experience may occur are: (1) the mentor and youth come from different backgrounds (2) the mentor and youth hold different values, beliefs, and lack general similarities (3) the mentoring between the mentor and youth is inconsistent and short lived (Eby et al., 2000). Therefore, to understand better why mentoring may produce a negative experience for
either the mentor or youth, it is important to observe the conditions under which they may occur.

**Components of Effective Youth Mentoring Organizations**

**Recruitment of Mentors**

An integral part of any successful mentoring program is having quality mentors. But recruiting mentors can be a lengthy and difficult process (Dimick, Higginbotham, MacArthur, & Poulson, 2007). While there is no fully documented study on how to effectively recruit mentors, numerous key aspects of mentor recruitment have been identified in literature. Specifically, the Mentoring Resource Center and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, recognizes several important steps in mentor recruitment.

Mentoring programs that are most successful in recruiting mentors identify prospective mentors’ “motivations and beliefs and speak to them directly during recruitment messages” (Nation, Kener, Wandersman, & DuBois, 2005). Some research has shown that the most common recruitment method is word of mouth (Nation et al., 2005). While websites, posters around campuses or other forms of advertising are beneficial, word of mouth through current mentors sharing their experience is shown to be one of the best approaches to gain potential prospective mentors (Nation et al., 2005).

Organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters use the tagline “little moments, big magic” in their national recruitment efforts. This concept suggests that mentors can dedicate small amounts of time and commitment to produce longer term changes in youths’ lives. Other mentoring organizations mention “the often dire circumstances of the
youth they serve” thus creating an “empathy-based appeal” that motivates individuals to become involved (Nation et al., 2005).

On the other hand, Rhodes presents the argument that a blended approach is best for recruiting prospective mentors. The recommended approach utilizes personal stories to emphasize the benefits and rewards that mentoring serves while clearly presenting the impact the organization has on its population (Nation et al., 2005).

Dimick et al. (2007) highlighted one mentoring program’s successful strategies to recruit college mentors to become youth mentors. The Youth and Families with Promise program (YFP) is administered by faculty at the Utah State University and is managed by county FCS/4-H agents (Higginbotham, Harris, Marshall, & Thomas, 2007). These agents are responsible for recruiting college mentors for at-risk youth. The program is now in its 12th year of operations and has highlighted three recruiting strategies that have been instrumental in “securing committed and caring college-aged mentors” (Dimick et al., 2007; Higginbotham et al., 2007).

The first highlighted strategy is making mentoring accessible to college students. Cautioning that mentoring organizations need to be aware of college students’ schedules and their transportation constraints, YFP staff and current mentors walk around campus distributing recruitment materials such as flyers and give a brief explanation about the mentoring program (Dimick et al., 2007). Current mentors also provide prospective mentors with information regarding upcoming orientation meetings. The aim of the orientation is to promote general interest in and knowledge about the organization’s work and to get students excited about becoming potential mentors (Dimick et al., 2007). The next step is to follow up by emailing or contacting those students who showed initial
interest in joining the organization. Through this email, prospective mentors are invited to attend another informal recruitment session (Higginbotham et al., 2007). The aim of the second meeting is to garner which of those prospective mentors show commitment from the start. The meeting includes a presentation summarizing the program’s goals, mission, and philanthropy and provides an opportunity for prospective mentors to connect with current mentors.

The second strategy that YFP highlights as an effective component in recruitment is “dispelling myths of mentoring and highlighting the benefits” (Dimick et al., 2007). YFP was alerted to concerns that the students felt inadequate; potential mentors questioned whether they would be able to make a difference if they joined. But YFP found that utilizing past stories to exemplify the work of current mentors alleviated the stress of “not being able to make a difference” (Dimick et al., 2007). In addition, YFP emphasizes that small actions and consistent dedication are the foundations from which results will come. Other concerns that students expressed are the financial aspects and time commitment. YFP was able to overcome these concerns by enhancing their communications that no expenses directly related to programming are put on the mentors and that although mentoring is a time commitment that varies per program, it usually does not exceed a couple hours a week.

The third recruitment strategy YFP highlighted is by asking potential college mentors to take the time to sign-up. The best way to successfully gain mentors is to directly and clearly ask them to sign-up (Stukas & Tanti, 2005). Indeed, a national mentoring study reported that 50 percent of mentors became involved due to the fact that they had ‘been asked’ (O’Connor, 2006). Only 4 percent of Americans between the ages
of 18-24 are involved in formal mentoring programs while 44 million American adults who are not currently involved in mentoring would seriously consider it (O’Connor, 2006). Therefore, taking the obvious but important step of actually asking potential college mentors to sign up is crucial.

**Screening**

A large focus within programming and implementation of mentoring programs is the selection of mentors. Regardless of the differences between the organizations, it is critical to screen and select mentors correctly. The screening and recruitment procedures regarding potential mentors should be clear regarding the development, implementation, and review of a mentor recruitment plan (Cannata, Garringer, Rummell, Arevalo & Jucovy, 2007).

When recruiting new mentors, mentor eligibility requirements (i.e., screening criteria) should be clear and concise, describing the necessary time commitment, training, age, program duration, and other screening procedures. To that end, benchmark standards identified by the National Mentoring Partnership include that the mentor must fill out an application and expressly agree to the time commitment (MENTOR, 2009).

The screening procedure should consist of a face to face interview, complete written application, review of criminal history, verification with the child abuse registry and other sexual offender registries, FBI clearance, and a list of references (Cannata et al., 2007; MENTOR, 2009). References and a face-to-face interview are important for assessing the “suitability of the prospective mentor for a mentoring relationship” (MENTOR, 2009). Just as importantly, criminal background checks, FBI clearances, and
sex offender registry checks are necessary and “must be conducted prior to initiating any contact between the mentor and the mentee” (MENTOR, 2009).

Some organizations particularly seek out individuals with certain backgrounds, such as teaching and youth development, to provide a more qualified mentor. Some organizations choose potential mentors based on their current youths’ profiles. Other organizations often match youth and mentors based on certain characteristics such as gender, mutual interests, and race/ethnicity (DuBois et al., 2002).

**Training**

Training and screening are essential and important components in any organization, especially those organizations working with youth. Mentoring programs which focus the majority of their time and funding on providing direct services to youth put those programs at risk if they are not spending sufficient time and money on adequately training and supporting their mentors. Mentors and staff who are not properly trained “may disrupt the implementation and effectiveness of the program” which may cause harm to youth (Keller, 2006). Training should provide mentors with information, guidelines, and support as well as answer questions regarding their involvement with mentoring through guided lectures, interactive scenarios, and lesson planning (MENTOR, 2005; MENTOR, 2009).

Formal training procedures are important and will “strengthen programs better [by] preparing both mentors and mentees” (Cannata et al., 2007). Content for the initial training sessions should include basic program guidelines, safety issues, and courses regarding communication and relationship building skills (Cannata et al., 2007). Other topics may include themes such as understanding youth risk behaviors, goal setting,
educational topics, communication strategies, and community referral services (Cannata et al., 2007). The mentor training should be mandatory for newly accepted mentors prior to their first mentoring experience. The National Mentoring Center, a well-respected evidence based educational laboratory, recommends that this required training lasts “from four hours to several days depending on the amount of relevant material to cover” (Cannata et al., 2007; Nation et al., 2005) Ongoing mentor training is also extremely important and focuses on building additional skills as the mentor-mentee relationship progresses (Cannata et al., 2007). Many organizations require journals or logs in order for mentors to track the progress of their mentee-mentor relationships (Foster, 2001).

The Mentoring Center, an organization created to provide technical assistance and training for mentoring programs in the San Francisco Bay Area, states that proper training allows mentors to gain confidence and learn about the strengths and vulnerabilities of youth. Through training, mentors will be able to brainstorm, gain attitudes and skills for optimal mentoring impact, and become comfortable with the curriculum and organizational materials ("The mentoring center,"). Dr. Keller, author of Program Staff in Youth Mentoring Programs: Qualifications, Training, and Retention, identifies strategies to “strengthen the capacity of mentoring programs to recruit, train, and retain” mentors (Keller, 2006). Keller (2006) identifies three components which, if properly administered, can lead to mentoring program success: mentor qualifications, training, and retention.

An effective mentoring organization provides initial training to new mentors as a form of orientation and source of knowledge. Training mentors assists them to develop critical skills they will need to create successful and effective relationships with their
mentees (Claassen, Nagy, & Vilela, n.d.). In addition to pre-mentoring training, follow up and ongoing training is essential and provides mentors with guidance and support. Mentors can benefit from ongoing training because it allows them to “process the developing relationship and learn additional positive approaches” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

**Organizational Outcome Areas**

Mentoring program outcomes will differ from program to program depending on their goals, mission, and strategic plans. Yet there are certain metrics that do (and should) overlap between programs such as program process outcomes, mentor and mentee experiences and outcomes, and organizational effect outcomes (National Center of Women, 2011). To this extent, it is very important for organizations to be able to measure the quality of the programs they administer based on standardized criteria.

**Youth Outcome Areas**

Mentoring programs can focus on different goals and measure different outcomes for youth, such as personal development, self-confidence, service, aspirations, and academic performance. Although each organization has their own mission and strategic plan in mind, they all center on promoting positive youth development (Mentor Michigan, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Center identifies the key developmental outcome areas that mentoring organizations should strive to target.

1. Increasing competence in regards to social development, academic achievement and life skills.
2. Improving the mentees’ self-confidence by providing consistent positive reinforcement.

3. Developing a positive trusting relationship which promotes increased positive connections to school and community.

4. Strengthening the mentees character and aspirations through positive societal and cultural values.


These goals are interrelated with the youth development model that espouses that “mentoring is founded on a strength-based rather than deficit-based approach to helping young people realize their full potential” (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Mentoring programs which can fully implement a youth development approach are likely to improve their outcomes (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

**Theoretical framework model**

To help understand youth mentoring and the inner-workings of how mentoring is performed effectively, an overview of the following theory is presented. This portion of the research focuses this particular theory which focuses on individual behavior, learning, and society, which then influence the design and evaluation of mentoring programs.

**Rhodes Model of Youth Mentoring**

Based on empirical and theoretical literature, Jean Rhodes developed a model of youth mentoring that “delineates several processes and conditions presumed to be important for understanding the effects of mentoring relationships on youth” (Rhodes &
DuBois, 2008). Rhodes argues that mentoring relationships “can promote positive outcomes for youth through a range of processes, specifically those that foster social-emotional, cognitive and identity development” (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). (See Figure) The benefits from the mentor and mentee relationship are only expected if the relationship formed has a strong bond and includes “mutuality, trust, and empathy” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). For this particular type of relationship to occur, time and consistency in forming the relationship are required. As demonstrated in the figure below, strong mentoring bonds may “contribute to positive youth outcomes through three interacting developmental processes: social-emotional, cognitive, and identity-related” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

**Figure #1: Rhodes Model of Youth Mentoring**

![Rhodes Model of Youth Mentoring](image_url)
The model presumes that social-emotional development of youth can be seen through their experiences with their mentors. The interactions youth have with their mentors in turn supports the youth to build relationships with others, peers and parents.

Mentoring relationships may also affect the youths’ cognitive developmental processes. This part of the model is derived from research that demonstrates the role of “social support from adults in fostering cognitive gains during development” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Through direct interaction with mentors youth develop various skills, become more accepting to advice, and are exposed to new perspectives.

The third developmental process in the Rhodes model is identity development. Identity development is the concept that through interacting with mentors, youth may shift their current and future view of themselves. By participating in activities, interacting with mentors, and learning about “educational or occupational opportunities” youth are able to “construct their sense of identity” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

In Rhodes’ theoretical model, mentoring relationships and the links to the youth outcomes may be influenced by family, peers, and other individuals in the youth’s life. For example, studies have shown that youth who are surrounded by social and behavioral problems are less likely to form strong bonds with their mentors (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). In addition, “environmental adversities such as family instability and socioeconomic disadvantage” can cause difficulties to the development of a mentoring relationship (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Spencer, 2007). Nonetheless, Rhodes’ model finds that youth from difficult backgrounds “can be found to be especially likely to benefit from mentoring” (DuBois et al., 2002).
In summary, each of the four theories briefly reviewed here helps explain and support, albeit it in different ways, the concept that mentoring programs are a benefit to at-risk youth in many ways. These theories have aided mentoring organizations to understand how to best approach mentoring at-risk youth. Moreover, the theories described most inform the past and current research of how to best approach youth mentoring.

**Past Research and Studies**

In last decade there has been an increase in mentoring programs specifically geared to serving youth. Currently there are over “5,000 mentoring programs [that] serve an estimated three million youths in the United States” (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). Despite the overall interest in youth mentoring, there is still very little empirical research on the effectiveness of planned formal mentoring programs and relationships. There have been some “recent programme evaluations” that have highlighted “some of the factors that increase the effectiveness of interventions” (Lowe & Rhodes, 2008). However, there are limited studies which expand upon how “variations in the characteristics of youth, mentors, relationships, and programmes affect outcomes” (Lowe & Rhodes, 2008). I present below an abstract of some of the major noteworthy studies within youth mentoring.

**Big Brother Big Sisters—Tierney, Grossman, and Resch**

As a growing field, the research and study of mentoring programs is primarily focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the programs and their outcomes. Thus far, the research has shown mixed results in terms of effectiveness. In 1995, Tierney, Grossman, and Resch administered a study to assess whether Big Brother Big Sisters reduced
“antisocial activities, improved academic performance, improved family and poor relationships, improved sense of self-esteem, and increased cultural awareness” (Tierney et al., 2000). The researchers administered a “comparative study of 959 10- to 16-year-olds who applied to BBBS programs in 1992 and 1993” (Tierney et al., 2000). Half of these youth were randomly assigned to a treatment group, “for which BBBS matches were made or attempted; the other half were assigned to BBBS waiting lists” (Tierney et al., 2000). Many of the youth were from low-income households and a large number of came from households with “a prior history of either family violence or substance abuse” (Tierney et al., 2000). The study compared youth who participated in Big Brother Big Sisters mentoring program and those who did not. Both groups were re-interviewed 18 months later (Tierney et al., 2000).

The researchers found that youth who had participated in Big Brother Big Sisters were less likely to use drugs, improved their school performance, and improved their overall relationships (Tierney et al., 2000). Yet, Tierney et al. (2000) did not see any improvements in self-esteem or increased exposure to cultural awareness. Despite that fact, the study is relevant to my research because it nonetheless shows that Big Brothers Big Sisters has seen other positive youth outcomes produced from their mentoring programs.

_Across Ages- Aseltine, Dupre, and Lamelin_

A study done in 2000 by Aseltine, Dupre, and Lamlein assessed various elements of the Across Ages mentoring program in order to evaluate whether the program was effective in improving mentee outcome areas. Across Ages, focuses on pairing adult mentors, over the age of 50 to mentor youth ranging from the ages of 9 to 13.
(ww.acrossages.org). The aim of the program is to “enhance resiliency of children in order to promote positive development” and to eliminate their involvement in high-risk behaviors (National Center for Mental Health, 2007).

The study assessed four areas: personal and social resources, school performance, problem behavior, and attitudes toward the elderly. The researchers conducted an experimental study of 400 6th graders living in Massachusetts who participated in Across Ages mentoring program. The researchers administered pre and post tests and found the following results. The mentoring group had significantly lower levels of problem behavior and alcohol use than those who did not participate in the mentoring program and significantly higher levels of self-control, cooperation, and attachment to school and family (National Center for Mental Health, 2007).

Across Ages received a nomination for model program by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In addition, the U.S Department of Health and Human Services ranked Across Ages one of the top 25 Youth Development Programs (National Center for Mental Health, 2007). This study is relevant because it shows that mentoring programs such as Across Ages are seeing beneficial results coming from their programming.


In another study, DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper conducted a meta-analysis of 55 different youth mentoring program evaluations (from 1970 – 1988) in order assess the impact of the programs (DuBois et al., 2002). A meta-analysis is a “statistical technique for combining findings from independent studies” to measure the effectiveness of what is being studied (Crombie, 2009).
In the 2002 report of the analysis, DuBois and his colleagues found that on average, youth who had participated in the various mentoring programs had benefited from participating in formal mentoring (DuBois et al., 2002). Despite some clearly positive results, they concluded that the “typical youth participating in a mentoring program” may only receive modest benefits (DuBois et al., 2002). With that being said, DuBois and colleagues caution that there are a wide variety of variables which play a role in whether youth benefit from mentoring. Numerous programmatic variables such as training and choosing mentors can affect the youth’s outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002). They propose that there is a need for “greater consideration of specific factors influencing effectiveness” (DuBois et al., 2002). Nonetheless, and even though some of the benefits were seen to be modest, a notable result from the study is “the support found for the prevailing view that mentoring programs offer the greatest potential benefits to youth who can be considered to be at-risk” (DuBois et al., 2002). This research is relevant to my study because it clearly points out the need for additional research to better determine the scope of the benefits and the effectiveness of mentoring programs. It also supports the need to consider many different variables in conducting those analyses.


DuBois, Rhodes, Portillo, Silverthorn, and Valentine administered a comprehensive meta-analysis similar to the previous one, however, in this study, they utilized youth mentoring program evaluations published from 1999-2000 (DuBois et al., 2011). They intended to expand on the prior research and identify additional relevant research. Two main goals of this study were: (1) Understanding “the patterns of change on outcome measures that underlie the observed effects of mentoring programs” (2)
Understanding to what “extent mentoring programs are beneficial for youth across multiple domains of outcomes” (DuBois et al., 2011).

DuBois and colleagues identified “73 evaluations of youth mentoring programs that met [the] eligibility criteria” (DuBois et al., 2011). The study found that youth mentoring programs had a positive impact on school attendance, grades, and academic achievement test scores (DuBois et al., 2011). Interestingly, it did not find that youth mentoring programs had an effect on youth’s substance abuse. The study also tested for moderators of program effectiveness to determine which factors may have an effect on the overall efficacy of the program. The study found that specifically “stronger program effects were found to be associated” with the following:

1. Programs serving youth who have behavioral problems
2. Programs serving more male youth than female youth
3. Programs serving youth with greater environmental risk
4. Programs that matched mentors and mentees in regards to backgrounds
5. Programs matching youth based on similar goals, values, and interests
6. Youth participating in programming did not come from single-parent households (DuBois et al., 2011).

The researchers found that each factor “continued to exhibit an association with program effectiveness that reached or approached statistical significance when controlling for its overlap with other [factors]” (DuBois et al., 2011). The overall findings determined that program effectiveness was greatest under the following conditions (DuBois et al., 2011):

1. Large numbers of male youth
2. Youth had a background of high individual or environmental risk
3. Programming included an “advocacy role for mentors”
4. Programming included an educational teaching component with mentoring
5. Mentors and mentees were matched based on similar interests and backgrounds

DuBois and colleagues concluded that “mentoring is by and large an effective mode of intervention for young people” (DuBois et al., 2011). This research shows that mentoring is effective and programs are showing positive outcomes in youth.

**Strong Women Strong Girls**

The mission of Strong Women Strong Girls is to:

Utilize the lessons learned from strong women throughout history to encourage girls and young women to become strong women themselves.

By building communities of women committed to supporting positive social change, Strong Women, Strong Girls works to create cycles of mutual empowerment for women and girls (SWSG, 2013).

By recruiting college mentors to go out in the surrounding community and mentor 3rd to 5th grade girls, Strong Women Strong Girls hopes to provide support and caring relationships through their programming. Each week college mentors team together and meet up with their mentees after school. College mentors use the lessons learned from strong women in history “to encourage girls and young women to become strong women themselves” (SWSG, 2013). Each week mentors and mentees meet for approximately an hour and a half. They begin their mentoring session by checking in with each individual by sharing one good thing that happened in their day. Next the mentors and mentees go
over what they learned last week and prepare to learn something new. The mentors and mentees then read about a strong contemporary or historical female role model and learn about a skill she exemplifies. Next, the girls and their mentors practice the skill they learned through an interactive activity. The girls complete the mentoring session by writing in their journal. Each week consists of the same structure yet with different skills being learned and new lessons being taught (SWSG, 2013).

**History**

In 2000, Lindsay Hyde founded Strong Women Strong Girls as a student group at Harvard University. The program first began working in two elementary schools and recruited six college volunteer mentors. Currently there are over 5,000 girls eligible for Strong Women Strong Girls programming in the Greater Boston area. In the programming year of 2012-2013, 175 college women mentors from six Boston universities: Boston College, Harvard University, Northeastern University, Simmons College, Tufts University, and University of Massachusetts-Boston, mentored over 720 girls.

By 2003, Strong Women Strong Girls gained national recognition among young women when it was featured in *Seventeen Magazine*. Soon thereafter, requests were given from educators, parents, and school systems asking Strong Women Strong Girls to provide mentoring in their communities. By 2006, Carnegie Mellon University partnered with Strong Women Strong Girls and programming commenced in the city of Pittsburgh. The programming was launched in Pittsburgh due to the “much needed gender-specific programming for elementary age girls”; there are currently 3,000 girls eligible in
Pittsburgh for Strong Women Strong Girls programming (SWSG, 2013). During the 2012-2013 programming year, 110 college women mentors from five universities, Duquesne University, Point Park University, Carlow University, University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Mellon, served over 400 girls.

In 2009, Strong Women Strong Girls expanded to its third location in South Florida and partners with AmeriCorps in providing programming. In Miami-Dade County “there are 26,000 girls eligible for Strong Women Strong Girls programming” (SWSG, 2013). During the programming year of 2012-2013, 60 college women mentors from five universities, Barry University, Florida International University, Miami Dade College-Homestead Campus, Miami Dade-Wolfson Campus, and the University of Miami mentored 400 girls in their communities (SWSG, 2013). Currently, Strong Women Strong Girls is located in three cities and partners with numerous institutions of higher education and program sites to provide mentoring to at-risk girls in the surrounding communities (SWSG, 2013).

Population Served

Strong Women Strong Girls serves girls from 3rd to 5th grade who are primarily situated in at-risk elementary schools. In order to qualify for Strong Women Strong Girls programming, the elementary school or community based organization must have 50% of the youth receiving free or reduced lunches (SWSG, 2013). Strong Women Strong Girls partners with “local elementary schools and community based organizations to serve low-income, at-risk girls in a space that is safe and accessible to them (SWSG, 2013). Strong Women Strong Girls is now located in Boston, Massachusetts, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Miami Dade, Florida. The number of lives that Strong Women Strong Girls touched
in 2012 totaled 2000. From this total number, 1400 were elementary school girls, 377 were college women, and 147 were adult volunteers (SWSG social impact report, 2012).

Strong Women Strong Girls is unique in that it provides its college women mentors with their own coaches/mentors. This program is called the Strong Leaders Program and is designed so that each student leader on their campus is matched with a Leadership Coach. This professional woman from the community will mentor the college woman in successfully completing her student leader responsibilities. All student leaders also participate in leadership training seminars and monthly webinar trainings in order to enhance their skills (SWSG, 2013).

**Values and Core Beliefs**

Strong Women Strong Girls is built on a foundation of six core values.

1. Love and support: emphasizing the aspect of building positive and consistent relationships that support each other.

2. Integrity and respect: the focus being that we are treating all others with respect.

3. Discovery: this value stresses the importance of seeking out and appreciating the unique talents and abilities of others and ourselves, as well as being open to new experiences, learning and growing.

4. Balance: knowing when to offer and accept help in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

5. Building a diverse female community: by honoring our commonalities and differences while recognizing the unique power of a diverse all-female community.

6. SPARKS: the idea that life is magical and full of excitement (SWSG, 2013).
The Strong Women Strong Girls Model believes that through building relationships with college women, adolescent girls are able to build a variety of skills. The organization implements this model to target six outcome areas: self-esteem, connection to a female community, increased skill set, increased community service awareness, leadership capabilities, and increased aspirations (SWSG, 2013).

**Unique Characteristics**

Strong Women Strong Girls is focused on creating a movement to recognize the passion, talent, and leadership that women and girls are providing in communities nationwide. There is an innate power that both girls and women hold to make positive social change (SWSG, 2013). Through pairing up leadership coaches with college mentors and college mentors with youth, Strong Women Strong Girls is promoting a cyclical mentoring movement.
The DREAM Program

The DREAM Program’s mission is to “build communities of families and college students that empower youth from affordable housing neighborhoods to recognize their options, make informed decisions, and achieve their dreams” (DREAM, 2013). Their mentoring program consists of three groups coming together: a university campus and its mentors, the youth and families from one of “DREAM’s housing partners and one individual assigned to support the program” from the DREAM staff (DREAM, 2013). College mentors work alongside youth and their families to plan out activities; this allows for parents and the community to become involved (DREAM, 2013). The action of involving all parties follows DREAM’s mission of village mentoring. In the village mentoring model mentors, youth, and community members gain feelings of “ownership and group culture” by working together to produce change (DREAM, 2013). Village mentoring is a partnership between a neighborhood and a college. By making this partnership DREAM embodies Hillary Clinton’s belief that “it takes a village to raise a child” (DREAM, 2013; Clinton, 2006).

History

The DREAM program was founded in 1999 by volunteers from Dartmouth College. Kathryn Ross, an AmeriCorps member, was in charge of developing an after-school program for at-risk youth living in housing developments. Kathryn, with the help of students attending Dartmouth, organized a mentoring program that is known currently known as DREAM. The acronym DREAM stands for Directing through Recreation, Education, Adventure, and Mentoring.
The organization quickly grew in numbers and the interest of neighboring communities promoted inquiry. By 2001, The DREAM Program was recognized as a non-profit organization. The organization had developed its High Adventure program which consisted of mentor-mentee trips around the United States and the summer programming. New programs began emerging in the local universities: the University of Vermont, Champlain College, St. Michaels College, and other community schools. The DREAM Program implemented summer camps to address the need for summer and winter programming and hired interns to run the camps. By 2006, year-round programming was providing a constant mentoring presence in children’s lives.

By 2009, every major college in Vermont had established a DREAM program on their campus that served the nearby neighborhood in need. DREAM then made their move to Boston where they established two local programs, at Boston University and Northeastern University. Currently, DREAM program supports over 350 mentoring pairs in 18 local programs and 13 colleges throughout the states of Vermont and Massachusetts (DREAM, 2013).

The DREAM Program university chapters’ organizational structure is headed by two co-chairs. These co-chairs serve for two semesters and provide leadership to the DREAM chapter and mentors. When DREAM chapters exceed more than 15 members, a committee structure begins to form. Each mentor becomes part of a specific committee, these committees split into groups and work on their specific goals and report back to the larger chapter. In addition to the two co-chairs, there are elected positions such as treasurer and secretary. DREAM university chapters meet weekly to discuss upcoming
events, answer questions, and check-in with all mentors (C. Butt, personal communication, February 15, 2013).

**Population Served**

Similar to Strong Women Strong Girls, the DREAM Program is a mentoring organization that pairs college mentors with at-risk youth from subsidized housing communities. The DREAM Program serves 350 youth dispersed in communities around Massachusetts and Vermont. The DREAM Program does both one-to-one mentoring where mentees are matched to one specific mentor as well as group mentoring. The program targets both boys and girls from the ages of 4 to 16 years old (DREAM, 2013).

**Values and Core Beliefs**

The DREAM Program developed a “Theory of Change” to demonstrate how the different mechanisms used in their mentoring program produced several desired outcomes. Through local programs as well as summer camps, the DREAM Program offers youth year round mentoring. The Theory of Change believes that through interaction with mentors, youth are able to gain a broadened world view, expanded social horizons, increased social capital, and increased self-reliance. These direct results thus lead to indirect results such as an expanded comfort zone and increased constructive risk-taking. All of these outcomes acquired through mentoring result in youth leading healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives (DREAM, 2013).
Unique Characteristics

The DREAM Program utilizes a Village Mentoring model; this model “creates a supportive and encouraging environment for all participants and promotes growth in each individual, as well as the group” (DREAM, 2013). By promoting ownership and responsibility of program outcomes, participants are motivated to become dedicated and resourceful. Village Mentoring also promotes developing a group culture. Mentors spend time with one another during programming to develop ideas, create activities, and plan mentoring sessions. This social component becomes an integrative part of recruitment and a source of energy within the program (DREAM, 2013).
Village Mentoring provides youth with three levels of support: one-on-one, group, and neighborhood support. Mentors spend one-on-one time with youth to cultivate trust and establish “new norms through role modeling” (DREAM, 2013). DREAM’s group mentoring program allows mentor and mentee pairs to spend time in groups with other pairs. This provides mentees with a network and builds a sense of “belonging and group identity” (DREAM, 2013). In these group dynamics youth build teamwork skills and “practice positive peer interactions” (DREAM, 2013). College mentors spend time in the youth’s community to engage with parents and other members. This involvement with neighborhood community members is “intended to boost the neighborhood in its own work of supporting its children and taking collective action on behalf of the children” (DREAM, 2013).

Research Questions

1. Does Strong Women Strong Girls meet the benchmark standards established by the National Mentoring Partnership?

2. Does The DREAM Program meet the benchmark standards established by the National Mentoring Partnership?

3. What are the best practices of Strong Women Strong Girls and The Dream Program?

4. What training procedures, support system, and amount of supervision are being implemented by these two mentoring organizations, Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program?
METHODOLOGY

Description of Study

I conducted a non-experimental qualitative study using the standards of mentoring developed by the National Mentoring Partnership to evaluate the effectiveness of two organizations. I content analyzed secondary sources including past literature and studies regarding mentoring programs. I explored the summary statistics, and tables provided by the organizations to assess the effectiveness of their program. Additionally, I used the outcome measures assessed by these two organizations, social impact reports, and internal evaluations provided to measure the successes and weaknesses.

Furthermore, I was able to provide recommendations for further improvement of mentoring programs, determine the best practices, and identify the essential elements of a mentoring program. Additionally, I was able to point out each organization’s weaknesses and aspects of the organization that needs more work.

Recruitment Strategy

I contacted four organizations, the Girls Scouts, the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Strong Women Strong Girls. I emailed these organizations inviting them to participate in my study and described what information I would need from them. The text of the email can be seen in the appendix. (See APPENDIX A) Only one of the four initial organizations agreed to participate. Strong Women Strong Girls agreed to participate and sent me the requested documents regarding their mentoring program. After this first attempt to recruit mentoring organizations I reached out to The DREAM Program, which agreed to participate and send me the requested documents.
Data Sources

After recruiting the two mentoring organizations, I gathered publicly available information regarding the organizations from their websites. In addition, the organizations provided me with various documents and reports regarding their programming and organization.

Strong Women Strong Girls provided me with mentor registration forms, mentor evaluation reports, and the mentor curriculum binder. In addition, I received the requirements regarding mentor selection and the requirements to become a Strong Women Strong Girl mentor. Furthermore, I received the curriculum used at training sessions and the requirements necessitated by mentors in order to be adequately prepared to mentor within this program. This information will help me to understand Strong Women Strong Girls training, mentor satisfaction, and requirements.

Strong Women Strong Girls was able to provide me with mentees’ pre and post survey results, mentee’ registration forms, annual social impact reports, and a performance measure report. This information will allow me to evaluate the impact Strong Women Strong Girls has had on mentees, mentors, and the targeted focus areas. Lastly, Strong Women Strong Girls provided me with the description of how they collect data and the outcome measures question alignment report. This information demonstrates how to interpret the pre and post survey questions and what outcome areas are being measured per question.

The DREAM Program provided me with mentee registration forms, mentee post surveys, and an evaluation report of DREAM’s impact on youth participants in Vermont. In regards to mentors, The DREAM Program provided an evaluation report of DREAM’s
impact on mentor participants. In addition, I have acquired various documents regarding mentor selection from the DREAM’s website such as interview questions for potential mentors and the DREAM’s mentor application. I have also obtained the mentor training and mentee curriculum binder from the DREAM’s website.
Table #1: Summary of Documents Received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Description</th>
<th>Strong Women Strong Girls</th>
<th>The DREAM Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mentee registration forms</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentee post survey</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site facilitator end and midyear survey</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent post survey</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>measurement tools</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concern form/incident report</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor binder</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentor guidelines</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training materials</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training schedule</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>new mentor forms</td>
<td>E&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrating impact</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annual report</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>model of inner-working of org</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentor evaluation reports</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>mentor interview questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new mentor application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E = received by email  
W = retrieved from website

2. The DREAM Program Co-Chair Resource Binder  
3. Strong Women Strong Girls guidelines can be found in the SWSG Mentor Binder  
4. The DREAM Program new mentor guidelines and boundaries  
5. Strong Women Strong Girls planning training document  
6. Strong women Strong Girls Required Training and Curriculum  
7. The DREAM Program required trainings document  
8. Strong Women Strong Girls New Mentor Application  
9. The DREAM Program New Mentor Application and Guiding Interview Questions  
10. Strong Women Strong Girls Demonstrating our Impact document  
Measures

In order to define whether an organization has been effective in their mission, I will begin by defining the different components that take part in an effective mentoring organization. These components consist of mentor training, mentor screening and the various youth outcome areas targeted and evaluated by mentoring organizations. This criteria has been established and standardized by the National Mentoring Partnership and reflects benchmarks of what is expected from mentoring organizations in order to be effective (MENTOR National Mentoring Partnership, 2005).

Screening Measure

According to the National Mentoring Partnership there are numerous essential components of screening mentors that must be implemented in order to be an effective mentoring organization. Potential mentors must complete a written application. Potential mentors must undergo a face to face interview with the organization. Organization receives a confirmation that the potential mentor understands and commits to the required time commitment of the program. In addition, mentoring organizations must conduct reference checks, child abuse registry, criminal record checks, and FBI clearances for all potential mentors (MENTOR National Mentoring Partnership, 2005).

Training Measure

An effective mentoring organization provides initial training to new and returning mentors as a way of orientation and source of knowledge. According to the National Mentoring Partnership mentoring organizations should provide mentors with an initial orientation introducing mentors to the organization’s mission, history, guidelines, and expectations. Mentoring organizations must provide mentors with a training that
encompasses courses and seminars relating to programming. This must be at minimum two hour in-person training. The training curriculum should go over organizational policies, program rules, goals and expectations, communication skills, and mentoring roles. In addition, courses such as diversity, cultural awareness, conflict resolution, youth development, and behavior management may be offered. Mentoring organizations must provide mentors with ongoing support whether through online webinars, in-person visits, or check-in phone meetings to address any concerns. Mentoring organizations that work primarily with college aged mentors must have weekly meetings with the college campus chapter to administer check-ins (MENTOR National Mentoring Partnership, 2005).

**Youth Outcomes Measure**

Many organizations measure outcomes by conducting pre and post surveys, in order to assess whether mentoring programs are beneficial to youth. These surveys measure youth outcome areas that involve different aspects of positive youth development. The target benchmark outcomes for youth are the following: increased self-confidence and self-esteem, higher personal aspirations, increased academic achievement, awareness of community service and responsibilities, better connection to the community and overall larger skill set. Overall mentees should be satisfied and enjoy being involved in programming.

**Analytical Strategy**

I have compared Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program to the benchmark criteria developed by the National Mentoring Partnership in order to determine whether each organization meets the standards. The three criteria that I have focused on are screening, mentor training, and youth outcomes. These three criteria
consist of the various metrics which have shown to be valuable and necessary in order to perform effective youth mentoring (Mentor Michigan, 2005; MENTOR, 2005). I have also compared and contrasted Strong Women Strong Girls’ and the DREAM Program’s mentor training, mentor screening, and youth outcomes to one another.

RESULTS

Screening

Comparing Strong Women Strong Girls to Criteria

Strong Women Strong Girls’ screening process requires that potential mentors complete a written application (“SWSG Mentor application,” 2012). The application requires potential mentors to fill out the mentor information form, provide a cover letter and resume to the designated chapter, and state their weekly availability. The mentor information form describes the time commitment associated with mentoring. This form describes the various activities mentors are required to attend:

1. At least one 90 minute mentoring session
2. Two day long field trips
3. At minimum three parent phone calls
4. Designated time spent on collecting data
5. Two day long yearly trainings
6. Weekly one hour chapter meeting
7. At least 30 minute feedback sessions with SWSG program staff
8. Closing celebration
In addition mentors are asked to fill out their contact information, emergency information, and provide answers to general information about themselves such as: birth date, language spoken, major, expected graduation year, and whether they have had previous mentoring experience. Lastly, the mentoring application requires potential mentors to address the following questions in their cover letter:

1. On which afternoon can you mentor? Include tentative days.
2. Why do you want to mentor with SWSG? What skills do you bring with you?
3. Share one story that demonstrates an area in which you would like to continue to grow and how SWSG can support this development.
4. Why do you believe mentoring is important?
5. Share a story that demonstrates your ability to work in a team. What was challenging? What did you learn?

Potential mentors undergo a face to face interview with current mentors and chapter directors at the designated university ("SWSG mentor interview questions," 2012). Strong Women Strong Girls asks the following interview questions:

1. Why do you want to mentor with SWSG?
2. Describe your strengths and how they will contribute to SWSG.
3. Describe two areas of improvement and how will SWSG help you build/overcome them.
4. Who do you consider to be a role model and how have they impacted your life?
5. If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be and why? What song best describes you? If you could have super-hero powers
what would it be and why? (ask one) ("SWSG mentor interview questions," 2012).

At the end of the interview, Strong Women Strong Girls ensures that the potential mentor understands the required time commitment of the program ("SWSG mentor interview questions," 2012). Strong Women Strong Girls chapters conduct reference checks by asking potential mentors to send them contact information for their references before or after they interview (M. Trombly, personal communication, February 13, 2013). Strong Women Strong Girls requires all potential mentors to complete child abuse registry, criminal record checks, and FBI fingerprint clearances.

**Comparing The DREAM Program to Criteria**

The DREAM Program’s screening process requires that potential mentors must attend one of DREAM’s partner colleges or universities (DREAM, 2012). Potential mentors are required to complete a written application ("DREAM mentor application," 2012; “DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012). This written application includes questions such as:

1. What characterizes you as a person? What kind of background do you come from? What activities are you involved in?

2. What are the most important characteristics of being a good mentor?

3. Why are you interested in becoming a mentor?

4. What age group do you believe you would work best with and why?

5. Describe your experiences working with youth.

6. DREAM requires that you are available every Friday from 3pm-6pm for group activities. However you must spend additional time with your mentee
during the week, do you have any ideas about activities you could do with your mentee during the rest of the week?

7. Do you honestly feel that you could uphold this type of commitment for the rest of your time in college? ("DREAM mentor application," 2012).

Potential mentors undergo a face to face interview with current mentors or the recruitment committee in charge of recruiting mentors at the designated university ("Example Guiding Interview Questions,” 2012; “DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012). The DREAM provides returning mentors with guiding interview questions, some examples include:

1. What appeals to you about The DREAM Program?

2. What other activities are you involved in on campus?

3. What kind of background do you have in working with children?

4. If you had to describe yourself in four words, what would they be?

5. In DREAM you may encounter some intense living situations, i.e., child abuse, neglect, domestic violence. How would you deal with these experiences?

6. Do you feel comfortable and able to commit to this program for the next three to four years? ("Example Guiding Interview Questions,” 2012).

After interviewing applicants, all current mentors get together and make decisions on who to accept as new mentors ("DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012). All new mentors must fill out the New Mentor Form ("DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012). The DREAM Program ensures that potential mentors understand and commit to the required time commitment of the program. In order to ensure that mentors are
committed to the program they must fill out and sign the Mentor Pledge (“DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012; “Mentor pledge,” 2012). The Mentor Pledge requires new mentors to sign a document verifying that they have read and agree to the following:

1. Time commitment of the program and pledge to fulfill that commitment to the best of their ability.
2. Read through the Child Abuse & Reporting Procedures packet.
3. Acknowledge the personal responsibility of transporting DREAM mentors and children and will not endanger their safety by taking risks while transporting them.
4. Agree to inform the DREAM office if they are convicted of a crime during the time that they are involved with DREAM (“Mentor pledge,” 2012).

The DREAM Program conducts reference checks. The DREAM program requires potential mentors to list two character references who will attest to their background, experience, and ability to care for children (“Mentor background statement,” 2012). DREAM asks potential mentors to list one professional reference and one personal reference, excluding family members (“Mentor background statement,” 2012). The DREAM Program requires all potential mentors to complete state sexual offender record checks, criminal record checks, FBI fingerprint clearances, and national online sexual offender check (“DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012; “Mentor background statement,” 2012). In addition, potential mentors are asked to provide the organization with a photocopy of their driver’s license and car insurance, if they plan on volunteering to be a driver for their local program (“Mentor background statement,” 2012; “DREAM co-chair resources,” 2012).
Table #2: Comparison of Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program to National Mentoring Partnerships Screening Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screening Criteria</th>
<th>Strong Women Strong Girls</th>
<th>The DREAM Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>written application</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>face to face interview</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization receives confirmation that mentor understands time commitment</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reference checks</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child abuse registry</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criminal record check</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBI clearance</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>driver license and insurance</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E = exceeds benchmark criteria  
M = meets benchmark criteria

**Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program**

Both of these mentoring organizations fulfill the majority of the National Mentoring Partnership’s criteria on screening mentors, yet they do have some differences between one another. With regard to new mentor applications, Strong Women Strong Girls provides applicants with a list of time commitments and required events that they will need to attend if they choose to become part of the organization. This ensures that mentors are aware of the requirements and are available to dedicate this amount of time to the organization. The application questions are primarily geared to finding out more information about the mentor’s availability and the mentor’s opinion on mentoring. Strong Women Strong Girls asks questions related to teamwork and leadership skills in order to gage the new mentors’ ability to work well in groups. This question attempts to find out whether prospective mentors work well in teams because programming will take place in a group mentoring setting. Strong Women Strong Girls wants to ensure that
potential mentors are capable and comfortable working closely with other mentors. In addition, Strong Women Strong Girls asks mentors to submit their resume in order to see what kind of experience the mentor may have with youth or in other volunteer organizations.

Similarly, The DREAM Program’s application asks mentors to identify their strengths and provide their thoughts on mentoring. Likewise, The DREAM Program asks mentors to provide their availability and points out a required time slot that mentors must be available. Different from Strong Women Strong Girls, The DREAM Program asks mentors specific and detailed questions about their experiences working with youth and the age groups the applicant has worked with in the past. The DREAM Program does not require mentors to submit their resume for consideration when applying. Resumes can be a great way of learning more information on the individual applying because it includes the applicant’s volunteer, work experience, GPA, and major. Mentors should be doing well in school in order to be sources of inspiration and role models for their mentees, therefore resumes contain helpful additional information when screening an applicant.

Overall, both organizations ask similar questions regarding mentors interests in mentoring and what they see to be beneficial in participating in a mentoring program. Mentoring applications should be well-rounded and balanced. A combination of both organizations applications forms a solid screening questionnaire for potential mentors.

Concerning the interview process, both organizations require mentors to undergo face-to-face interviews. These interviews are conducted by current mentors or mentors with leadership status within the group/chapter. This allows current mentors to take leadership roles and determine which individuals will benefit and grow their chapter
Stronger. Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program both ask mentors to describe why they want to be involved in their mentoring organization and how they feel they can benefit their group/chapter. This allows the organizations to screen for proactive, invested, committed individuals who will bring their assets and skills to the organization.

Strong Women Strong Girls’ interview questions focus on how their organization can help mentors grow and mature, by asking them how they think SWSG can help them overcome difficulties. This relates to Strong Women Strong Girls mission and goals of building “cycles of women empowerment” throughout mentoring (SWSG, 2013). Strong Women Strong Girls focuses on the mentors also growing from the experience of being involved in their organization producing change in mentors and mentees alike.

Conversely, The DREAM Program asks mentors to describe their background with working with youth and how they would deal with certain difficult situations. While Strong Women Strong Girls interview questions focus on mentors’ ability to mature and grow from their experience with their organization, The DREAM Program’s questions focus more on mentors experience with youth and dealing with different challenging circumstances. The DREAM Program’s focus is to screen for mentors that have had past experiences with youth or been involved in youth centered organizations. This relates to the fact that The DREAM Program matches their mentors with mentees for one-to-one mentoring. Asking questions based on past experiences with youth is crucial in determining matches. Mentoring organizations should use a mix of interview questions when screening for mentors. Questions asking about past experience with youth and thoughts about mentor growth and personal aspiration would make for a comprehensive interview.
Both organizations emphasize the time requirements that their program requires and asks mentors to confirm their availability. The DREAM Program exceeds the National Mentoring Partnership’s criteria on confirming that mentors understand and are committed to the organization’s requirements by mandating all new mentors to sign the Mentor Pledge. This is a great way to hold mentors accountable for their required service to the organization, to their fellow mentors, and to the youth they are serving.

With regard to clearances and checks, Strong Women Strong Girls requires mentors to apply for three clearances: child abuse registry, criminal record checks, and FBI fingerprint clearances. The DREAM Program requires: state sex offender checks, national online sex offender check, criminal record checks and FBI fingerprint clearances, yet does not require child abuse checks. Crimes that would “cause an individual to be on a sex offender registry should show up in an FBI criminal background check, but this is a ‘good double check’ ” (MENTOR, 2013). The national sex offender registry aggregates all state registries and makes it easy to search for individuals. Since FBI clearances include screening for crimes that would cause an individual to be on a sex offender registry it may be more beneficial to look into implementing child abuse clearances. Child abuse registries often include complaints of abuse that never “resulted in arrest or prosecution and so would not be in a criminal database” (MENTOR, 2013). In addition, the National Mentoring Partnership recommends that effective mentoring organizations should require child abuse registry checks.

Another difference between the two mentoring organizations is their regulations and checks on mentors who will be driving. The DREAM Program requires that mentors who will be driving other mentors to local program sites provide proof of insurance and
driver license. This is an additional check should be implemented in all situations where mentors will be driving other mentors and/or youth. Although some Strong Women Strong Girls university chapters use public transportation to get to mentoring sites, others do use vehicles for transportation. Conducting driver license checks would be beneficial because it would allow Strong Women Strong Girls to see whether mentors have any tickets, citations, or convictions related to poor driving including DUIs ("Department of public," 2013). By conducting these checks and ensuring that mentors who are driving are responsible individuals, Strong Women Strong Girls would be taking precautionary measures to guarantee safety. Conducting driver history checks should be necessary if an individual is going to be involved in any kind of driving with regards to the organization.

**Training**

**Comparing Strong Women Strong Girls to Criteria**

Strong Women Strong Girls provides new mentors with an initial orientation introducing them to the organization’s mission, history, guidelines, and expectations (SWSG mentor orientation, 2012). This orientation provides new mentors with specific information on the inner-working of the organization such as core values, program curriculum, and a description of the organizational structure (SWSG mentor orientation, 2012). In addition, the orientation serves as an informational session to answer questions in regards to the organization and offer new mentors with statistics on the organization’s growth and the impact it has had.

Strong Women Strong Girls exceeds the benchmark criteria set by the National Mentoring Partnership by requiring all mentors, new and returning mentors, to attend two six hour training seminars each semester (SWSG mentor application, 2012). In addition,
Strong Women Strong Girls exceeds the criteria on offering diverse training courses by providing mentors with curriculum geared to their position within the organization. The training curriculum consists of different courses depending on the type of mentor: new mentors, site leaders, returning mentors, or executive board members (SWSG required training, 2012). The goal of Strong Women Strong Girls training is to help mentors develop the skills and attitudes they need to perform well in their role as mentor. By introducing mentors to the concept of positive youth development and providing information about the strengths and vulnerabilities of the children who are in the program, mentors are equipped with the skills to mentor.

New mentors are required to attend courses such as Strong Women Strong Girls 101, Behavior Management 101, Building a Strong Foundation, and Engaging with Diverse Girls (SWSG required training, 2012). SWSG 101 focuses on exposing new mentors to the work SWSG has done, the impact the organization has had, and the goals it hopes to achieve (SWSG mentor orientation). New mentors, who attend the Building a Strong Foundation course, learn about how to run a weekly mentoring session through simulation, learn about SWSG history, and learn how to implement SWSG’s core values.

Returning mentors are required to attend Advanced Behavior Management and have the option to choose between several other courses. The elective courses offered in fall and spring trainings are: Responding to Tricky Situations, Get Active, Girl Development, and Pressing Local Community Issues Impacting Girls (SWSG required training, 2012). Site Leaders, mentors who take on leadership roles within their mentoring group, receive different elective courses for training. Site Leaders are required to attend a webinar training of Civicore, an online database Strong Women Strong Girls
uses to track mentee surveys, attendance, and record outcome measures to determine program effectiveness. Site Leaders are required to attend Strong Women Strong Girls Logic Model and Evaluation course and Parent & Site Facilitator Engagement course (SWSG required training, 2012).

Chapter Executive Board Members, mentors who serve as a leadership team for their chapter, attend different training courses. The curriculum offered for Chapter Executive Board Mentors consists of courses such as: Time Management, Mentor Recruitment, Mentoring Relationships and Group Dynamics, Planning for Transition, Life after SWSG, and Effective Leadership (SWSG required training, 2012). This all day training provides all mentors with an update on the organization’s successes and goals for the upcoming year (SWSG planning training, 2012).

Strong Women Strong Girls provides mentors with ongoing support through monthly online webinars. Chapter Executive Board Members receive online webinars throughout the mentoring year. These webinars cover topics such as: Branding (for recruitment and awareness), Finance and Fundraising, Giving and Receiving Feedback, Managing Mentors, Diversity in Service & Social Change, Event Planning, Marketing Leadership Skills, and Engaging in and Leading Reflection (SWSG required training, 2012).

Strong Women Strong Girls provides chapters with a Program Manager who is in charge of supporting the chapter in their mentoring programming and operations. The Program Manager is in constant contact with each university’s Chapter Directors. Strong Women Strong Girls chapters hold mandatory weekly meetings to discuss the upcoming week’s events and check-in with mentors.
Formal training procedures which include course related curriculum are important and offer mentors structured information (Cannata et al., 2007). Strong Women Strong Girls training is extensive and requires a large time commitment from mentors. College students may not have the designated amount of time required to dedicate to all the training demanded by the organization. Keeping this in mind, it may be beneficial for the organization to consider more succinct and condensed trainings to fit college student’s schedules.

Comparing The DREAM Program to Criteria

The DREAM Program provides new mentors with an initial orientation introducing them to the organization’s mission, history, core values, and expectations (DREAM core values, 2012; DREAM mission statement, 2012). In addition, these informational orientation sessions provide new mentors with mentoring stories and examples shared by current mentors (DREAM co-chair resources, 2012). All mentors, new and returning mentors, are required to attend a two hour in person training conducted by the DREAM Program’s staff or current mentors (C. Butt, personal communication, February 15, 2013). The DREAM Program does reach the benchmark criteria set by the National Mentoring Partnership by providing a two hour training.

The DREAM Program’s training discusses mentor boundaries, transportation guidelines, and child abuse reporting procedures. In addition, staff explains safety precautions to be taken within mentoring and in the surrounding communities. Moreover, the training provides mentors with information regarding what to do in case of an emergency. This training touches on mentoring roles and behavior management but more in depth training on those topics happens through mentors modeling and coaching new
mentors during activities and at mentor meetings (C. Butt, personal communication, February 15, 2013). The DREAM Program uses experiential learning to train new mentors. This type of training philosophy has been defined to allow mentors to self-initiate and self-evaluate based on experiences. Experiential training allows mentors to receive knowledge that is immediately useful and applicable versus an academic curriculum training (“Experiential learning,” n.d.). Experiential training is designed to create a supportive environment to transfer knowledge from one individual to another. This enhances the idea of continuous growth and learning through hands on experience (“Discovering the mentor,” 2012). Current mentors model appropriate behavior and share experiences allowing new mentors to gain experience through peer mentoring.

The DREAM Program offers ongoing training for their mentors through numerous online tools (DREAM co-chair resources, 2012). All DREAM mentors have access to the DREAM Program’s Google account, which provides mentors with documents necessary to perform efficient mentoring such as calendars, forms, and registration packets. Additionally, the DREAM Program will run other trainings as needed based upon either mentors suggestions or staff observations. These trainings range from basic child management and engagement, to how to run productive mentor meetings, to how to talk to teens about sex. The DREAM Program will provide outside training services to conduct these courses if they feel this will produce more knowledge and be more rewarding to the mentors participating (C. Butt, personal communication, February 15, 2013). This flexibility in training is beneficial because it targets the specific needs of the mentors rather than encompassing all aspects of mentoring. Allowing mentors to communicate with staff about what trainings they want to have increases the
potential for addressing problem areas. Since the mentors are the individuals that are actively interacting with youth, it is important that they also share their opinions on what trainings they feel are needed in order to benefit the program.

The DREAM Program does not meet the National Mentoring Partnership’s criteria in ongoing online training because it does not provide mentors with online webinars. However, the DREAM staff is in touch with the co-chairs, leaders of university chapters, on a weekly basis over the phone, email or in-person. DREAM prides itself on being able to support programs in person when they require assistance (C. Butt, personal communication, February 15, 2013). Staff attends mentor meetings and weekly activities on a regular basis. The organization ensures that mentors feel comfortable to reach out for support at any time and ask staff for guidance (C. Butt, personal communication, February 15, 2013). This is a better way of addressing problems and providing continuous support than online services. Online webinars and online training materials should be available for mentors who wish to do their own research on topics or continue their training. There are numerous online training services and training documents available to mentors on the internet. Yet, in-person visits from staff are more beneficial to both mentors and the organization as a whole, because it allows a direct line of communication.
Table #3: Comparison of Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program to National Mentoring Partnerships Training Criteria

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<th>Training Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>minimum 2 hour training</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>training provides diverse courses</td>
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<td>training course: organizational policies and program rules</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>training course: goals and expectations</td>
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<td>training course: communication skills and mentoring roles</td>
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<td>ongoing support and training</td>
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<td>online webinar</td>
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<td>in-person visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>weekly chapter meetings at university</td>
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<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E = exceeds benchmark criteria  
M = meets benchmark criteria

**Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program**

Both Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program provide new mentors with an initial orientation to their organization. During this initial orientation both mentoring organization’s go over their organization’s mission, values, expectations, and history. Both organizations allow their current mentors to perform this informational orientation to new mentors.

Once mentors have gained knowledge about the organizations mission and what their role as a mentor would consists of, they are asked to attend mandatory trainings. Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program have different philosophies on training mentors. Strong Women Strong Girls requires mentors to undergo two six hour training days. Strong Women Strong Girls provides courses geared to adequately train, provide knowledge, and answer mentors concerns about mentoring. The DREAM
Program utilizes experiential learning and role modeling to train their new mentors. These different approaches each have their benefits. Curriculum based learning allows mentors to cover numerous different aspects of what they may deal with in a mentoring session. Whereas role modeling allows new mentors to experience hands-on what they are going to be doing. There are certain aspects of training that must be discussed in a curriculum course setting while other aspects of training can be experienced through experience. Safety components and organizational guidelines should be explained prior to allowing mentors to interact with youth. Mentoring roles and behavioral management can be taught through role modeling and if needed mentors can request additional training on how to deal with difficult situations.

With regard to ongoing support Strong Women Strong Girls does provide online webinars accessible to mentors in order to continuously provide mentors information and training. On the contrary, The DREAM Program does not offer online webinars yet offers consistent in person staff support. Both mentoring organizations have their staff conduct check-ins with their university groups/chapters through phone calls, emails, and in-person visits. Check-ins are important because they allow mentors to feel supported, ask questions, and address concerns. Support from staff is best through in-person visits and followed by phone calls and emails. Online support, through webinars and training materials should be recommended as additional support that mentors can utilize.

**Youth Outcomes**

*Comparing Strong Women Strong Girls to Criteria*

In order to evaluate whether Strong Women Strong Girls mentoring program is having an effect on the targeted youth, data are gathered from a diverse range of
constituents, “including girls, parents and guardians, partners, college women and professional women” (SWSG, 2013). The performance measurement system captures “achievements and areas for improvement, providing a holistic picture of the relationships, skills and role models provided and developed in Strong Women, Strong Girls” (SWSG, 2013). This holistic approach to evaluating effectiveness is done by administering surveys to mentors, parents, and site facilitators regarding the effect the program is having on the mentees. Strong Women Strong Girls seeks to improve youth outcomes in the following six areas: socio-emotional skills, female community, self-esteem, community service, leadership, and college and career aspirations (Performance measure report, 2011). The statistics for the following outcome areas come from Strong Women Strong Girls’ social impact report on program year 2011-2012. The total number of girls served in this program year was 1385, 892 pre surveys were administered, and 510 post surveys were administered. From these pre and post surveys, 382 surveys were a matching set, meaning that this number of girls filled out both the pre and post surveys.

Strong Women Strong Girls meets the benchmark criteria set by the National Mentoring Partnership in regards to youth outcomes. Strong Women Strong Girls saw an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, personal aspirations, connection to community, and community service. Strong Women Strong Girls does not target academic achievement as one of their outcome areas; therefore this criterion cannot be evaluated. Strong Women Strong Girls exceeds the benchmark criteria on ensuring that mentees are satisfied and enjoy being in the program. The social impact report stated that “85% of girls improved in one or more outcome areas [and] 67% of girls improved in two or more outcome areas”. In addition, the report stated that 92% of girls responded they
would want to participate in Strong Women Strong Girls next year. Moreover, 85% of
girls in 5th grade are interested in learning about other girl-serving organizations.

Strong Women Strong Girls uses pre and post surveys to collect data regarding
the specific outcome areas the organization aims to target (Demonstrating impact, 2012).
The survey questions administered to the girls are specifically geared to evaluate certain
measurable outcomes (Girl outcome measures, 2012). Strong Women Strong Girls survey
found that out of the 381 mentees who answered questions relating to self-esteem, 44%
felt an increase in self-esteem from participating in the mentoring program.

With regards to the outcome area, sense of community, Strong Women Strong
Girls focuses on enhancing mentees feelings of being part of a strong female community
by building positive relationships with college women mentors and peers. The survey
found that out of the 384 mentees, 48% felt an increase in connection to their community
from participating in Strong Women Strong Girls.

Strong Women Strong Girls third outcome area focuses on increasing mentees
aspirations to attend college and increase their knowledge of the various career options
that are available. The survey found that 41% of 384 mentees felt an increase in
aspirations towards college from participating in Strong Women Strong Girls mentoring
program.

With regards to the outcome area, increased leadership capabilities, Strong Women
Strong Girls focuses on improving mentees leadership skills, positive values, and life
skills through interactive activities and teamwork. Strong Women Strong Girls survey
found that out of the 382 mentees 41% felt an increase in their leadership skills.
Strong Women Strong Girls aims to increase mentees knowledge and desire to participate in community service, by enhancing positive values and ideas about community service through service projects. Strong Women Strong Girls survey found that 29% felt an increase in knowledge and desire to becoming involved in community service.

Lastly, Strong Women Strong Girls aims to increase mentees social competencies and coping skills by increasing their social and emotional skills. Strong Women Strong Girls survey found that 42% felt an increase in social and emotional skills from participating in the mentoring program.

Figure #4: Strong Women Strong Girls’ Social Impact Report Program Year 2011-2012

Comparing The DREAM Program to Criteria

The DREAM Program published an evaluation of DREAM’s impact on youth participants in Vermont for the program year of 2008-2009. This study administered
surveys to all 13 program sites in the summer of 2009” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). 137 youth surveys were completed, 76 girls and 61 boys. The youth who completed the survey ranged in age from 4-6 years old, 19 were between ages of 4-7 years, 61 were between ages of 8-11 years, and 57 were between ages of 12-16 years (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). The survey questions were divided up into multiple sections each targeting a certain outcome area. The evaluation examined “areas of youth development identified in DREAM’s Theory of Change, as well as assessing the commitment level and quality of mentoring relationships” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). DREAM targets four primary outcome areas through their mentoring: increased self-reliance, increased social capital, broadened worldview, and expanded social horizons.

The DREAM Program meets and exceeds the benchmark criteria set by the National Mentoring Partnership in regards to youth outcomes. The outcomes for which they exceed are increased self-confidence and self-esteem, higher personal aspirations, and gaining a better connection to their community. The benchmark outcome, awareness of community service and responsibilities, is not directly measured in DREAM’s evaluation but can be seen throughout the various outcome areas. The DREAM Program does not target academic achievement as one of their outcome areas; therefore this criterion cannot be evaluated. Lastly, The DREAM Program exceeds the benchmark criteria on ensuring that mentees are satisfied and enjoy being in the programming. The evaluation reported that “96% of children look forward to the time they spend with their mentor, feel their relationship with their mentor is important to them, and feel comfortable with their mentor” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010).
The major results from the evaluation found that in general, youth identified with having increased confidence and self-sufficiency. This outcome area focuses on measuring whether youth have “increased their competence by knowing and becoming confident in themselves and their abilities” through DREAM programming (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). The study found that 87% of children from ages 8-11 feel confident in the skills they have acquired through participating in The DREAM Program (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). Additionally, 77% of the children 8 and older who have attended Camp DREAM enjoy trying new things and challenging themselves. Moreover, 77% of the children ages 12 and older feel like they “can make positive, healthy choices for their life” since being part of The DREAM Program (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010).

The second outcome area is social capital. Social capital is defined as “relationships that increase the social ‘wealth’ of children, providing them with a network of individuals and institutions that afford them support, opportunities, and resources” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). The evaluation found that “77.2% of children responded that DREAM helps them when they want to try new things” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). Additionally, “92% of children 8 to 11 [years old] feel like they can trust people from DREAM”, and 70% of those children feel comfortable speaking to their mentors about their future and careers (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). Furthermore, 80% of children 12 and older stated that through DREAM they have met people who they can trust and count on in the future (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010).

The third outcome area is expanding social horizons. DREAM defines expanding social horizons as “introducing youth to a diversity of views, aspirations, personalities,
and life choices” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). DREAM believes that through interacting:

- with people from a wide spectrum of life experiences [they are providing]
- opportunities for children and youth to expand their own personal peer group, experience a greater diversity of relationships, and grow increasingly comfortable interacting with people of differing backgrounds (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010).

DREAM children reported that being involved in DREAM programming has made them more comfortable meeting new people and that they have consequently made new friends since being involved (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). The evaluation reported that 78% of children ages 4 to 7 years and 77% of children ages 8-11 identified “having made new friends since being part of DREAM” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). Additionally, 75% of all children participating in DREAM programming feel like more comfortable meeting new people. Moreover, 80% of children 12 and older have stated that since being involved in DREAM they have met friends that are different from them (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010).

The fourth outcome area is broadened world view. This outcome area focuses on expanding youths’ perspectives and gaining a greater sense of possibility through their involvement in DREAM. Through participating in activities such as campus visits, mentoring sessions, and outdoor summer/winter camps, DREAM aims to provide youth with a “greater repertoire of experiences, introductions to different cultures, and exposure to places outside their community” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). The evaluation found that 86% of children said they “went on trips with DREAM where they see and do new
things with DREAM” (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010). Additionally, “91% of children ages 12 and older” agreed being involved in DREAM allowed them so see and do new things (Haag, Hauf, & Howe, 2010).

Figure #5: DREAM’s Impact on Youth Participants in Vermont for the Program Year of 2008-2009

Table #4: Comparison of Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program to National Mentoring Partnerships Youth Outcomes Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Outcome Areas</th>
<th>Strong Women Strong Girls</th>
<th>The DREAM Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self-esteem/self-confidence</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic achievements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoidance of risky behavior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal skills</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspirations</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health and life skills</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better relationships</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection to community</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M = meets criteria
**Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program**

These two mentoring organizations use different program evaluations to measure the effectiveness of their programs. Strong Women Strong Girls administered a pre and post survey, at the beginning and end of the program year, in order to measure activity within their target outcome areas. Pre-tests and post-tests are primarily used to determine whether the mentees have improved while they were in the program (Rhodes, 2002). By comparing results from both pre and post surveys, staff and researchers can see whether mentees have improved. This test cannot directly indicate whether “the program caused the improvement” because there are numerous alternative explanations that could explain the changes such as “maturation or events that occurred between the time the [mentee] took the pre-test and post-test could influence the outcome” (Rhodes, 2002). However, this evaluation method gives more accurate results than administering only a post-test.

On the other hand, The DREAM Program conducted a post-test survey evaluation on the mentees. Post-tests are commonly used to help determine how “mentees are doing at the end of a mentoring program” (Rhodes, 2002). While post-tests can show whether “mentees have achieved certain goals”, post-tests are not indicative of whether a mentee has “changed during the program, only how the [mentee] is functioning at the end of the program” (Rhodes, 2002). Recommendations that have been made by researchers on conducting future program evaluations consist of administering surveys twice during the program year in order to measure changes in mentees. With regards to future evaluation and results it is important to administer surveys six months after mentees have completed the program. By evaluating mentees “three to six months post
completion allows time for the behavior to change” (United States office of personal management, 2008).

**DISCUSSION**

There are numerous findings when evaluating The DREAM Program and Strong Women Strong Girls to the National Mentoring Partnerships’ benchmark standards, and when comparing these mentoring organizations to one another. First, overall my study showed that both The DREAM Program and Strong Women Strong Girls meet the majority of the National Mentoring Partnerships’ criteria on screening, training, and youth outcomes.

According to the National Mentoring Partnership there are numerous essential components of screening mentors that must be implemented in order to be an effective mentoring organization (MENTOR, 2005). Strong Women Strong Girls and The DREAM Program have done a great job of screening mentors. With minor adjustments in their current procedures this will allow them to select and screen the best potential candidates for their organizations.

When comparing the two mentoring organizations training curriculum and procedures there are identifiable differences. While Strong Women Strong Girls training is much more thorough and provides extensive curriculum based learning courses, the DREAM Program uses experiential learning through model mentoring and coaching to train new mentors. These different philosophies on training mentors each have their own benefits. People have different ways of retaining information and learning. Curriculum based learning allows mentors to frame concepts and highlight main points through PowerPoint’s and interactive simulations (Cannata et al., 2007). Good curriculum based
trainings allocate time for mentors to interact, participate, and share knowledge while teaching the designated material (Cannata et al., 2007). Downsides of curriculum course based learning include time requirements, lack of flexibility, and a lack of creativity (Cannata et al., 2007).

Benefits of experiential learning and model mentoring include learning through action (“Discovering the mentor,” 2012). This allows mentors to gain a deeper understanding about the different aspects of mentoring through participating in the actual act of mentoring (“Experiential learning,” n.d.). These different philosophies on training should be used jointly in order to prepare mentors appropriately. While some courses such as behavioral management should be discussed in a curriculum based setting prior to mentoring other courses such as mentor roles and communication skills can be developed and taught through hands on training. An attempt to form a training program for new mentors that includes both curriculum based courses and hands on coaching would benefit the organization, mentors, and mentees. Mentoring organizations should use a blend of training methods to cater to mentors who tend to learn and retain information better whether hands on or curriculum based.

With regards to youth outcomes, The DREAM Program’s evaluation of youth outcome areas was done using post-tests to gather data. Recommendations for further evaluations would include pre and post surveys in order to determine the change youth are experiencing when participating in the program. Although both organizations, The DREAM Program and Strong Women Strong Girls, are only a decade old, they should be contemplating how to keep in touch with the mentee alumni of their programs. Both organizations should begin planning on how to evaluate whether graduates of their
mentoring programs have achieved certain measurable goals such as graduating high school, attending college, and becoming part of the workforce.

**LIMITATIONS**

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation is that this study included only two organizations. Future research would reach out to more organizations and include them in a similar study. In addition, the participation of larger and well known mentoring organizations would be beneficial. The participation of a well-known mentoring organization would provide younger organizations with a model to base their organizational structure and allow them to gain valuable ideas.

The second limitation is that this study only focused on three of the six criteria the National Mentoring Partnership established for creating effective mentoring organizations. I chose to measure the criteria of screening and training mentors because they are two of the initial steps organizations must fulfill in order to begin their programming (MENTOR, 2005). I chose the criteria youth outcomes, because it is the most important part in determining whether a program has been effective in its mission. Future research should evaluate whether mentoring organizations are effective based on all six of the criteria developed by the National Mentoring Partnership. These include recruitment, screening, training, matching, youth outcomes, and closure (MENTOR, 2005; MENTOR, 2009).

When looking at youth outcomes, future research should take into consideration parent and site monitor surveys on the youth’s performance within the program. This will allow for a well-rounded assessment of youth outcome areas (Rhodes, 2002). In addition, since every program has different outcome areas, different outcome measures are utilized...
to determine the effectiveness of the programs. Implementing standardized and homogeneous measures of evaluation would allow for different programs to become evaluated and compared the same way. Lastly, future research should look into ways that mentoring organizations can work cohesively and build partnerships with one another to provide consistent mentoring services across all ages.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several policy recommendations that can be made on three different levels: government, local community, and organizational. On an organizational level, mentoring programs need to follow a set of best practices in order to become more effective in their mission. Suggestions include, using systematic approaches to screen mentors (MENTOR, 2009). Incorporating a blend of training tactics such as experiential role modeling and curriculum based learning to train mentors. Suggestions also include providing constant support for mentors through various avenues such as online webinars and in person check-ins (MENTOR National Mentoring Partnership, 2005). There is a need to develop the resources and tools provided to mentoring organizations with regards to screening and training of mentors. New strategic initiatives should include training and screening support systems made available to youth mentoring organizations by youth development practitioners and specialists through online sources, seminars, and classes to ensure that essential elements are covered. This technical assistance will provide for an overall more stable infrastructure within organizations. Lastly, mentoring organizations need to properly evaluate their work in the community and broadcast their outcomes to gain recognition and visibility.
On a community level, community leaders can promote a culture of involvement by providing information to members about volunteering and civic engagement with regards to mentoring. Community members and leaders need to spread awareness about the benefits mentoring programs can have on the children in their community. In addition, a local initiative should be put in place, including a strategy that utilizes different mentoring programs to cover a child until they are a young adult. Pushing mentoring organizations to collaborate with one another to provide mentoring services for youth throughout their young adult years is crucial. Many organizations focus on particular ages groups and when the youth grows older they are no longer eligible for that particular program (MENTOR, 2005). By linking link-minded mentoring organizations and promoting that they work together, youth will be provided with constant mentorship.

Given the cost involved in effectively “serving the young people in need of mentoring around the country, mentoring programs must have access to adequate funding to run high-quality programs” (MENTOR, 2010). The federal funding that has been allocated to mentoring programs has “increased substantially as well, with annual congressional appropriations of $100 million since 2004” (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008, Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012). Yet, in 2010, mentoring funding was “cut in half by the elimination of the Department of Education’s Mentoring Programs grants” (MENTOR, 2010). The elimination of this program has had a direct effect on mentoring programs and their availability to serve at-risk youth. A considerably greater investment in mentoring is needed. Federal funding can help sustain the current mentoring programs while allowing mentoring organizations to more effectively recruit, screen, train, and support their mentors.
CONCLUSION

Much remains to be studied with regards to program evaluations and mentoring effectiveness. Yet, results from this study and studies prior have shown that mentoring programs have a positive effect on the youth they are serving. To more fully realize mentoring’s potential as an intervention strategy for at-risk youth, organizations need to collaborate with the community, funders, and advocates to strategically find ways to enhance programs and involve more youth.
REFERENCES


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November 11, 2012

Organization’s Person
Organization
Address

Dear [Recipient Name]:

I am a Master’s candidate in the Social Justice and Public Policy Center at Duquesne University. I am writing my master’s thesis on the “Effectiveness of Mentoring At-Risk Youth”, which explores the relationship between mentoring programs such as yours in youth development. Using a comparative study, I plan to analyze the impact of youth mentoring programs and their best practices on achieving positive outcomes. I’m reaching out to the [organization name] to ask for information about your program that will assist me in my research. After I defend my thesis, I’d be honored to share a copy of it with you.

I am interested to review any of your materials for the years 2006 to 2012 that look at the efficacy and impact of your program and how you incorporate best practices on an ongoing basis. Specifically, I would appreciate receiving data, statistics, tables and / or reports that address: 1) the criteria and metrics you use to measure the success of your program, 2) how you assess those criteria and metrics, 3) how that translates into best practices for your program; and 4) the effectiveness of your program in achieving positive results for the at-risk youth that you serve.

I’m interested in materials for years 2006 to 2012:

- Describing the training curricula, training materials, and schedules you use to prepare mentors to be effective participants in your program.
- Information showing the outcome areas your organization targets and your success rates relative to those targets.
- Assessing personal changes in youth experience as they participate in your program.
- With regard to the mentors, I would grateful if you would also share the materials you have for those same years about mentor recruitment, selection and screening process.
- Necessary qualifications for being a mentor, how and where you recruit mentors, the candidate interview and assessment process.
• Criteria used for accepting mentor applicants and the ratio of mentor applicants to
  the applicants actually accepted as mentors in your program.
• Reports that will educate me about your mentor turnover and retention rates and
  average duration of their commitment to your program.
• Evaluations or reports regarding mentor satisfaction with their program
  experience.

With regard to the youth you serve, I am asking for information that summarizes:
• Youth’s characteristics (age, race, ethnicity, level of education, etc.)
• Average age of entering the program
• Average length of participation in the program
• Levels of targeted outcome areas prior to, during and after participation in
  your program, and evaluation or assessment of their participation in the
  program.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I’d be grateful if you will please share with me
any statistics or reports that show your organization’s assessment of the efficacy
and success of your mentoring program for the years 2006 to 2012.
I realize my request for information isn’t simple, but I’m hoping I’ve been specific
enough that you have a sense of the type of material I need and are able to assist me
in my research. If there is any problem with my request, or if you need additional
information, please call me at 650.283.4279 or send me an email at
stepplingc@duq.edu. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Ann Marie Popp,
at Duquesne University. She can be reached by telephone at 412.396.6495 or by
email at popp2842@duq.edu if you have any questions or concerns.
Thank you for your time and attention to my request. I greatly appreciate it, and
look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Steppling
Graduate Student, Duquesne University