

A Qualitative Analysis of Mentee Experiences in a Campus-Based Mentoring Program

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Abstract

Preventing first-time offending youth from repeating delinquent behavior is of interest to society. Empirical evidence indicates that high-quality mentoring can prevent a wide array of negative outcomes for at-risk youth. This study examines the perspectives of 87 first-time offending youth, ages 10 to 18 years ($M = 15$), who participated in Campus Connections: Therapeutic Mentoring of At-Risk Youth. Through in-depth individual interviews, youth reported that mentoring helped them: (a) improve school experiences and performance, (b) create healthier relationships, (c) feel better about themselves, (d) think more positively about their future, and (e) decrease engagement in delinquency. The mentees attributed program components as well as the relationship with their mentor as important. These program components can be integrated into other mentoring programs.

Key words: at-risk youth, youth mentoring, qualitative methods, individual interviews

Introduction

Adolescent delinquent behavior, including theft, substance abuse and possession, vandalism, trespassing, assault, and harassment is a serious problem in the United States. In 2012, more than 1.3 million adolescents were arrested (Puzzanchera, 2014). This is a major public health concern, as many of these youth will have life trajectories permeated by substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors and serious mental health problems (Mason, Hitchings, McMahon, & Spoth, 2007; Palermo, 2009; The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2004). Moreover, these delinquent behaviors impose a significant toll on our nation. A recent study estimates that the cost to society of a single serious offender aggregates to \$5.7 million (Cohen & Piquero, 2007; Welsh & Farrington, 2015). Therefore, preventing first-time offending youth from repeating delinquent behavior is of particular interest and tremendous benefit to our society.

Mentoring of first-time offending youth has been shown to prevent negative outcomes and promote positive youth development (DeWit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose & Lipman, 2016; Matz, 2014). Mentoring has been associated with a wide range of positive outcomes, such as deterring risky behavior and promoting prosocial behavior (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Williams, Barnes, Holman & Hunt, 2014). Developmental benefits include higher self-esteem, greater engagement and performance in school, reduced delinquency and substance abuse, and improved mental health (Blinn-Pike, 2007; Herrera, DuBois & Grossman, 2013). Mentoring also has provided increased positive connections to school, peers, and family, significant improvements in academics, and reduced rates of depression and involvement in bullying (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002; Protogerou & Flisher, 2012). Improvement on these developmental outcomes has been linked to the prevention of delinquency and continued delinquency after first offense (Li et al., 2011; Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, & Nichols, 2014). However, mentoring is not always effective and some studies show only modest improvements (DeWit et al., 2016; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Matz, 2014), and roughly half of all mentoring pairs terminate prematurely (Pryce, & Keller, 2012; Rhodes, & DuBois, 2006). The mentoring literature calls for more research to inform mentoring programs on which factors are critical to successful mentoring relationships and to better understand how and what benefits mentees experience.

Although considerable quantitative research exists on the outcomes of mentoring for youth and what makes for a positive mentoring relationship, the literature using qualitative methods is

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limited (Brady, Dolan, & Canavan, 2017; Levine, Rhodes, Levitt, & Spencer, 2016; Pryce & Keller, 2012; Varga & Deutsch, 2016;). In this study, we interviewed mentees to learn what they believe the effects of mentoring have been for them following a 12-week, 48-hour mentoring program. The purpose of this study was to add the voices of mentees to the literature. The mentees in this study participated in a campus-based mentoring program. The mentees were referred through the juvenile justice system, following their first arrest for a low-level crime. The findings reported in this study can inform mentoring programs across the country by providing mentees' own perspectives on how participating in a mentoring program has influenced their lives.

Method

Participants

All participants in this study were youth mentees enrolled in the Campus Connections (formerly known as Campus Corps) mentoring program during Fall 2010 and Spring 2011. All participating youth were given an opportunity to be interviewed for this study. Out of 225 youth, 87 volunteered to be interviewed. Sixty-four percent of the participants were male, and 36% were female. Participants ranged in age from 10 to 18 years ($M=15$). The race and ethnicity of the participants was similar to the racial demographics of the geographic area and Campus Connections, with the majority of the sample primarily identifying as Caucasian (52%), with fewer Hispanic (37%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.4%), African American (1.2%) and other (3.8%) participants. Some participants chose not to identify a race or ethnicity (4.6%).

This study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee at the University. All participants of the research study were required to meet the same eligibility criteria for program entry. Entry requirements included that youth were at risk for future delinquency, between the ages of 10 and 18 years, and residing in Larimer County, Colorado. Participants were part of a probationary "diversion program" intended to reduce the depth of a youth's entry into the juvenile justice system by providing opportunities for expunging charges and avoiding adjudication (Chapin & Griffin, 2005). A diversion plan could include several components such as community service, drug or alcohol education, and enrichment activities. One option for a diversion plan is for the youth to participate in the Campus Connections Mentoring Program.

The Campus Connection Mentoring Program

Campus Connection pairs college student mentors with youth mentees, most of whom are involved with the juvenile justice system. Mentors and mentees meet one day a week, for 4 hours, for 12 weeks on the University campus. Mentor-mentee pairs participate in a community of approximately 25 other pairs and engage in meaningful activities together, including exploring campus during 30 minute weekly walks, called Walk and Talk, getting homework help for an hour each week, eating dinner together, and participating in 2 hours of prosocial activities (e.g. sports, art, cooking).

Procedure

Recruitment

A member of the research team informed youth about the opportunity to participate in the study and explained the details of what participation involved. Participants were expressly informed that their decision to participate in the study would in no way affect their involvement in Campus Connections, and that all information would be kept strictly confidential. Participants were entered into a drawing to win an iPod as incentive for their participation.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis and were 16 to 32 minutes ($M = 22$) in length. For a full list of the interview questions, refer to the Appendix. Interviews were audio-recorded for purposes of ensuring accurate transcription at a later time. The questions were developed by the research team with the goal of exploring youth participants' experiences of participating in the Campus Connections mentoring program. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, interviewers were encouraged to follow the lead of each youth as they communicated their perceptions of how participating in the mentoring program had affected them. Through these individual interviews, youth described any changes they were experiencing as a result of participating in the Campus Connections Mentoring Program. The interviews were conducted by a trained graduate student researcher.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Several measures were taken to achieve trustworthiness of the results of this study. First, as described by Shenton (2004), specific tactics were used to ensure honesty of participants. That is, participants were encouraged to be candid before the start of the interview and the

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interviewer stressed to all participants that there were no right or wrong answers. Participants were also reminded that their comments would have no bearing on their status in Campus Connections or the juvenile justice system. Second, in order to promote youths' comfort in being honest, interviewers were not part of the Campus Connections' program staff. Third, as described below, a team approach to data analysis was used to ensure validity of the emerging codes (Creswell, 2007). The use of NVivo 9.0 software allowed us to create an electronic audit trail of the findings, so that codes could be traced back to units of text in the interview transcripts. This process facilitates reexamination of units of text, as needed, which serves as an additional validity check. Finally, as recommended (Shenton, 2004; Creswell, 2007), we provided a rich depiction of the phenomenon, supplemented by quotes that are representative of participant responses.

Data Analysis

Audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed and transcripts were assigned unique ID numbers to maintain the confidentiality of the interview participants. Two research staff members used NVivo 9.0 software to further code interview transcripts into first- and second-order codes. First-order codes were used to group phrases and dialogue into meaningful units, while second-order codes were used to group such units into key themes. For example, on the first-order code "Campus Connections was helpful academically," there were four second-order codes, including "Campus Connections helped youth improve grades," "Campus Connections helped youth with schoolwork," "Campus Connections improved school attendance," and "Campus Connections improved understanding of schoolwork." The inter-rater reliability score was 93% for the first reliability check. Inter-rater reliability was also assessed at various points throughout the coding to check for coder drift, with the second reliability score being 91% and the final score being 97%. The interview data indicated that youth had a very positive experience in the mentoring program. This could be that only youth who had a very positive experience volunteered to be interviewed for this study. Although the data is extremely positive, all aspects of the youth's responses were reported. Of the youth that participated in the program, 39% volunteered to participate in the study which allowed for a large sample size of interviews to be investigated in this qualitative study.

Results

Interview responses revealed that youth perceived the program influenced them the most in five key areas: (a) improved academic experience, (b) enhanced relationships, (c) feelings

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better about themselves, (d) improved future orientation, and (e) decreased likelihood of further delinquency. Below, for each area or theme, we report the number of sources (i.e., the number of unduplicated participants who shared a similar response) and the number of references (i.e., the number of times a similar response was given, regardless of the participant), as these data represent the saturation and importance of each given response. Additionally, subthemes are identified to further describe the main themes. Quotes are included to provide an illustration of the meaning of each theme, and implications of the themes for mentoring programs are provided in the discussion section. The example quotes represent a wide variety of the participants in the study. We use only gender and age to identify them.

Improved Academic Experiences

Eighty-seven percent of participants ($n = 76$, with 162 separate references) identified that mentoring was academically helpful to them. Participants indicated that they specifically experienced improvement in the following areas: improvement of grades and attendance, development of a more positive attitude towards school, and improved student-teacher relationships.

Improved grades and attendance.

- *Male, 16:* "I had low grades, like F's and now I don't have none. Now I just like go [to class] on time. [My mentor] would tell me, 'I'm gonna check your grades,' and I would, like, try to get them up before the next week....[My mentor] would help me with homework sometimes or we would go and see my grades. Yeah, then [my mentor] would tell me, 'Hey, if you turned this in I bet you'd get a good grade.'"
- *Male, 15:* "Yeah, my attendance got better. I think I ditched like once this year. But last year I ditched like once a week."
- *Female, 16:* "My grades have actually gone up. My freshman and sophomore years, I failed school straight up, so this last year, I went back to [name of school], and I wasn't really liking it, and then I started coming here and [my mentor] actually started helping me with my work, so I was like, 'Oh OK, so I might as well do good with it.'"

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Improved attitude towards school and increased academic confidence.

- *Male, 16:* "When my grades were low, I was kind of like, 'Whatever. I'm not going to pass; why should I even bother?' But you know, after [mentor's name] helped me get [my grades] up, I was like 'Okay, I can do this.'"
- *Male, 17:* "I was more positive about [school], especially getting help from here."

Positive changes in relationships with teachers, including increased respect and better communication skills.

- *Male, 15:* "When my grades were low, I could have cared less what [teachers] thought about me so I'd just leave class, not really care, and then they were always on me about it so it just made me not care for the teachers even more. But when my grades went up 'cause [mentor's name] helped me, you know, I actually started staying in class. My teachers were telling me that I was doing a good job and complimenting me a lot, so that made me feel good, so I had to keep on doing that."
- *Male, 13:* "Before [mentoring], a teacher would tell me stuff and I would flip out. My mentor has helped me figure out things to do so that I don't just blurt out at them and get mad at them and they get mad at me."
- *Female, 17:* "I used to get in fights with my teachers about why I thought class was stupid and stuff, but now I kind of respect them more and get along with my teachers better."

Enhanced Relationships

Seventy-two percent of youth ($n = 62$, with 201 references) reported that they experienced enhanced relationships with peers, family members and others.

Enhanced relationships with peers

For some youth, mentoring was helpful in identifying or ending unhealthy relationships. Thirty-five percent of participants ($n = 22$) who expressed a change in relationships stated that due to their time in a mentoring program, they no longer associated with peers who were a negative influence. Other youth shared their appreciation for the opportunity mentoring provided to spend time with peers who were similar to them and who did not judge them.

- *Male, 16:* "Yes, I don't hang out, like before I hung out with people who were smoking pot and stuff. Yeah, there are a lot of people like this at my school. You know, coming

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[here] and seeing where [smoking marijuana] gets you, gets you in trouble with the law and stuff like that. I didn't want to hang around with people like that. I just realized that, even if I'm not doing something and they are, I can still get in a lot of trouble and I don't want that."

- *Female, 15:* "A lot of people lately have been telling me how great I am and stuff. One girl recently told me she likes me because of my personality and my sense of humor...I learned not to just stand back and watch, and to actually meet people. It actually has changed my life a lot."
- *Male, 14:* "Yeah, I've actually made some new friends. I've actually been a lot smarter when it comes to choosing my peers."

Improved relationships with family members.

- *Female, 14:* "It helped with my relationship with my mom a lot. Before we argued a lot and we didn't get along. We'd scream at each other, it just wasn't good. But my mentor [gave] me tips to go home and deal with the problem by not getting mad at each other so easily. It helped a lot with that and it helped my attitude with my brother, showing me that I don't need to get mad at him all the time and just be patient with him, cause he's not the most pleasant person to be around. Well, I just saw the way that people interacted with the people around them that are like close in age, like here, and like, me and my brother never really interacted before at all. We'd just scream at each other, and I just took that advice when I saw it."
- *Male, 14:* "My relationship with my Dad has changed a lot because [my mentor] just taught me to interact with people, like how to start conversations and stuff. And lately, I've been getting on my Dad's good side and stuff. He's treating me way differently... positively."
- *Female, 15:* "I never used to get along with [my parents] ever. They are starting to understand that I can't do it on my own. I don't yell at my parents anymore. At first it was hard, I couldn't stand being at my house, but now I can stay home and watch T.V. with my parents."
- *Male, 17:* "I can tell my parents that they annoy me and we can sit down and work it out. We used to not do that and I used to just leave my house and not come home. Now I feel like I can actually be at home with my parents and my brother and be happy."
- *Female, 12:* "I've learned some communication skills so I could talk to my mom about stuff."

Improved relationships in general

Many participants expressed that their relationships had improved through meeting new people and learning skills to form new relationships. They also reported an improvement in social skills, specifically listening skills, reduced shyness, reduced conflict with others, less judgmental attitudes, and improved communication skills. Many youth also reported that they enjoyed the social element of the program and felt a sense of belonging.

- *Female, 16:* "Usually I kind of just stay back meeting new people, but now I'm not as afraid, I'm not as afraid to meet new people."
- *Male, 13:* "I am a better listener now because whenever someone is talking to me I am more attentive than usual."
- *Female, 13:* "[Campus Connections] was really fun because you get to hang out with a lot more people. And it's kind of [a new] experience because at home not a lot of people want to hang out with me. I kind of have anger issues, so people kind of stay away from me at home, so it's kind of nice to have people that like me."
- *Male, 14:* "I feel more open and talk to people more often."
- *Female, 16:* "Yeah, I'm actually, really good when it comes to holding my tongue now, and I'm actually...I'm a lot better when it comes to approaching the situation more calmly and actually dealing with the conflict in a more responsible way than just, you know, freaking out and making a huge deal about it. I'm actually more civilized."

Feeling Better About Themselves

Fifty-four percent of participants ($n = 47$, with 91 references) described improved feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem.

- *Male, 16:* "Yeah, I feel more confident in myself now. Before I was kind of down on myself because of bad grades, you know I didn't get along with my teachers and stuff like that and I was just kind of like 'they don't care about me' but after coming here and seeing that the, you know, having them [the mentors] help me out, like talk to me about my problems I was having during a certain day, it just made me start feeling better like 'they do care.' They have a strange way of showing it, but I know that they genuinely care."
- *Male, 12:* "It changed a lot because I felt better about myself, I felt great about myself, and I felt like I was happy."

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- *Female, 17:* "Before Campus Connections, I was like, 'Oh I'm never going to succeed; I'm never going to get anywhere.' I'm just going to be living with my parents my whole life until I get kicked out of my house because I'm such a problem. But then I came here and got the support that I needed. I've noticed that if you get the right support and give the right support, you get to where you want to be and how you want to feel about yourself. Now that I've been here, I feel like if I want to do something, and it's something that I really want to do, I will do it no matter how many people tell me I can't. Talking to my mentor helps me because she tells me that I can do it and she supports me and it helps. She would ask me questions and that made me feel good to be asked."

Improved Future Orientation

Seventy-five percent of participants ($n = 65$, with 103 references) expressed that their attitudes about their future plans about school and career were improved.

Future plans regarding school.

- *Male, 16:* "I know I need to have some form of college education to get a good job and there's a lot of things that I'm interested in that I didn't think I would be at first, but after being to the different places here and learning more about them, it just kind of showed me that college is a little bit more helpful than I thought it would be."
- *Female, 16:* "I kind of came in here like, I don't really know if I want to go to college, I don't really know what I want to do yet, and then hanging out here, you know, and everyone's talking about what it is they want to go for in college, so I actually like, it's like, well ok, now I want to go to college, and I actually want to get a career."
- *Male, 15:* "It made me want to go to college more, that's for sure. Like, I wanted to go to college in the first place but I thought it might be too much work. But I see that [my mentor] is getting her work done and having fun. She's getting a psychology degree and stuff like that, so that's great. It definitely upped the ante on wanting to go to college."

Future plans about career.

- *Female, 18:* "It has brought my attention to 'there is more than just easy.' My mentor showed me and made me think of what I want and if I work harder for what I want, then I'll get a job that I really like. I want to do something with the law."

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- *Male, 11:* "I learned what kinds of job I'm going to get. Like I think that I'm going to get a job working on cars."
- *Male, 15:* "Yeah, I was interested in the Marines and they encouraged me to study up on it. You know, read all of the requirements that are necessary to join, things like that. So that was pretty cool."

Decreased Likelihood of Further Delinquency

Seventy-six percent of participants ($n = 66$, with 115 references) felt that they had gained positive influence from their participation in mentoring in the area of delinquency. Many participants specifically identified that they would avoid reoffending, and would decrease or cease the use of drugs and alcohol. Interestingly, many youth reported that a concern related to disappointing their mentor influenced some of their decisions to stay out of trouble.

- *Male, 17:* "Yeah, [my mentor] helped me start thinking about what I want to do with my life instead of being in trouble. I mean, I've only wasted one year of my teenage life being on probation but, I mean, it's better than wasting like six or seven."
- *Male, 17:* "Just seeing how much fun it could be being sober around other sober people. That's what I kind of learned 'cause, I mean, you can have fun while smoking weed and drinking, but sometimes it's not the right fun. And, being at Campus Connections I got to see how much fun you can have sober."
- *Male, 16:* "When I first came in, I used to have low self-esteem you know, just because drugs and alcohol will do that. I came in here, just like, 'yeah this is gonna suck,' or 'they aren't gonna like me.' As I started, as the weeks went by and I was staying clean and everything, I was like, you know, I'm not such a bad person, maybe I have more of a purpose in life than just doing drugs or whatever."
- *Male, 17:* "I was always like I need to be high, I want to get high all the time, and now that I'm always sober it's not that hard. I have friends that are always like, 'Man, I wanna smoke a bowl. I'm so bored.' I'm like, you don't have to get high to not be bored, let's just go for a walk or something."

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine youths' perceptions of the influence that participating in a mentoring program had on their lives using qualitative methods. Participants expressed that mentoring had helped them: (a) improve their experience in school, (b) build healthier relationships, (c) feel better about themselves, (d) think more positively about their future, and

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(e) decrease their likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior. Youths' perceptions about the influence that mentoring had on them, gathered through inductive qualitative methods, are consistent with outcomes revealed through other program evaluations of mentoring programs (DeWit et al., 2016; Dubois et al., 2002; Grossman & Garry, 1997; Matz, 2014; Miller, Barnes, Miller, & McKinnon, 2013). The results of this study are also consistent with the known protective factors for preventing continued delinquency (Haegerich & Tolan, 2008). Mentoring, as perceived by youth mentees, appears to be a promising avenue for promoting these protective factors. For example, the present qualitative data showing that the mentored youth of Campus Connections have improved relationships with others is consistent with the existing quantitative data that mentored youth show increases in positive connections to school, peers, and family (King et al., 2002; Protegerou & Flisher, 2012). The youth of this qualitative study also indicated improved self-esteem and a decreased likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior, which mirrors the findings of Blinn-Pike's study (2007).

Interpretation of data and implications for mentoring programs

The youth interview data indicated that the mentoring relationship and the structure of the program were seen as influential. Deutsch and Spencer (2009) suggested that researchers investigate how mentoring programs function at two levels: the program and the dyad. Some of the Campus Connections program components were not specifically mentioned by the study participants as being particularly influential whereas other components were referenced repeatedly. For instance, Campus Connections has a structure that brings together about 28 mentor-mentee pairs for 4 hours over a 12-week period. These pairs are divided into groups of eight (four mentor mentee pairs), called Mentor Families, in which the mentees are similar in age and balanced by gender. Throughout the evening of mentoring, mentor and mentee are in close proximity to each other (i.e., sit next to each other for dinner and participate together in prosocial activities) while interacting with the other pairs. Mentees repeatedly talked about the importance of having a mentor *and* being with their peers and other mentors. Further investigation would be required to better understand how pairs spending this time together and with others emerged as important in this study.

Mentees reported improved relationships with their peers and families. The improvement in relationships seemed related to several key program components, including Mentor Families. For instance, youth mentioned the benefit of having opportunities to make friends with the other mentees while being supported by their mentors. Family relationships are prioritized in the Campus Connections program design, which may produce benefits for these relationships.

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For instance, the program requires an intake with the youth and at least one parent prior to beginning the program. Program staff maintain the connection to youths' families throughout the 12-week program in several ways. A weekly progress report is completed by mentors and youth each night and sent home to parents or caregivers, and mentors make it a point to connect with caregivers when they drop off and pick up youth from the program. The instructor of Campus Connections, a family therapist, reaches out several times to the families throughout the 12 weeks (and more frequently if needed). The family also is invited to the Campus Connections' graduation celebration. It could be that the emphasis on peer and family relationships contributed to youths' perceptions that their relationships were enhanced, but further investigation is needed. Other mentoring programs may benefit from increasing the opportunities for pairs to interact and to provide opportunities for caregiver interaction.

Interviewees reported improved feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem through their participation as mentees in Campus Connections. The mentees reported the importance of their mentor in this improvement and they reported benefiting from many people in the program helping them recognize their strengths and appreciating their abilities. Mentors are trained to offer positive feedback to their mentees and to help them become more aware of their strengths. It also appeared that many youth felt comfortable taking risks and trying new things in the program, which helped them improve their feelings about themselves. For example, mentees have many opportunities to participate in prosocial activities, such as sports or creative arts, and mentors are trained to help mentees feel safe engaging in new experiences.

The youth in this study expressed that participating in Campus Connections improved their attitudes about their futures. It may be that the mentoring program being held on a college campus with college student mentors may have contributed to this benefit. For instance, many mentees may not have close family members who have pursued higher education and may not include a college education in their own plans for the future. By experiencing a college campus and knowing college students who may have similar family backgrounds, mentees may begin to see higher education as a possibility for themselves. They also may learn about opportunities for financial aid, and different academic disciplines or career paths that are beyond the scope of what they knew existed, which could spark an interest in the youth. Providing opportunities for mentees to experience a college campus and see themselves reflected in the experiences and identities of college students might be beneficial components for other mentoring programs to consider incorporating.

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When youth who have engaged in delinquent behaviors participate together in programs without adequate supervision, negative outcomes can result (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999). At Campus Connections, mentors and mentees are paired in a mentoring community so that youth are not interacting with each other without one or more mentors present. This program design allows mentors to provide adequate oversight for youth and to redirect conversations related to delinquent behaviors. This program design may allow youth who have previously learned to include the glorification of delinquent behavior or drugs and alcohol in their peer relationships to practice new ways of relating to one another. Youth often mentioned the benefit to them of learning to have fun without being on substances or engaged in problem behaviors.

The interview data suggests that mentees appreciated and benefited from the accountability that their mentor provided in the area of academics, such as checking in on their grades and school attendance. They also reported that the direct assistance with homework contributed to improved grades and school confidence. Better engagement with their teachers was also a positive outcome they reported. One factor to consider is that since the mentors are college students, there might be benefit in that mentees and mentors share the experience of being students. In addition, the mentoring takes place on a college campus providing more academic context to their education. It might also be that mentees react more positively to another student checking in regularly on grades and attendance than a parent or older adult. Further investigation would be required to understand what factors contributed to the improved academic outcomes reported by mentees in the program.

What is missing from our data?

Of particular interest is a major component of the Campus Connections program that was rarely mentioned by youth. A major component of the program is that family therapy graduate students are present during all aspects of the program. At any time during the program, a mentor or a mentee can write out a TIME (Therapy in the Moment for Everyone) card. For example, a TIME card might say "my mentee was bullied at school today," "my mentee's dad is getting out of jail tomorrow and he is nervous," or "I am sad that my boyfriend broke up with me." When requested, therapists will invite the mentees to check in with them. These check-ins may last anywhere from a few minutes to more than an hour, depending on the severity of the issue and needs of the mentee. Most all youth in the program request to meet with the therapists at least once, and youth appear positive about this aspect of the program. Therefore, it is interesting that so few youth mentioned this aspect of the program during interviews. One

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possibility is that youth were embarrassed to discuss this aspect of the program. Another possibility is that the provision of therapy during the program isn't as important to program outcomes as we perceive it to be. Additional investigation is warranted about this aspect of the program.

Study Limitations

As with all research, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the youth were selected from one formal mentoring program and thus, results may not be generalizable to all formal mentoring programs. Moreover, the benefits of formal mentoring relationships may not be applicable to informal or natural mentoring relationships. Second, although the goal of the present study was to examine the perspectives of youth mentees participating in a mentoring program, all results were self-reported and not intended to represent program efficacy. Rather, the results provided insight into the experience of being a mentored youth. Because youth volunteered to be interviewed for this study, a limitation of the findings could be that youth who were highly satisfied or highly unsatisfied could be who volunteered. It also could be that the more social or extroverted youth volunteered. The findings should be viewed with this limitation in mind.

The nature of this study provided a first-hand account of the perceptions of youth receiving mentoring services. Although society has accepted mentoring as effective, a review of the literature reminds us that not all programs are effective and that continued research is needed. This study responded to the need for understanding youths' perceptions of such programs.

For more information about Campus Connections visit the website at <http://www.hdfs.chhs.colostate.edu/students/undergraduate/campusconnections/>

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Appendix

Individual Interview Script

Thank you for participating in this interview. I am tape recording our conversation so that I don't have to take the time to write everything you say down. Is that ok?

We are interested in learning about your experience in Campus Connections, if you feel it had an influence on you, and if so, in what ways.

1. I'm interested to hear what you thought of Campus Connections. What was your experience like?
2. Did you enjoy being at Campus Connections? What did you most enjoy? What did you least enjoy?
3. Campus Connections was designed to support teens in growing and developing as a person, and in having an easier and better time with life. In what ways did Campus Connections help or influence you, if at all? In what areas of your life did it help with?
 - a. [Are you in school? (Or GED?)]. Did it help with school/GED? In what way?
 - i. Did your attitude about school change at all? Tell me about that . . . (How did your attitude change? What brought about that change?
 - ii. Get better grades? Tell me about that . . . (What helped you get better grades?)
 - iii. Get along better with teachers? Tell me about that . . . (How did that happen?)
 - b. Did you start thinking more about your future? Tell me about that . . . (What are your plans? How did that happen?)
 - i. Did you learn anything about going to college from being on campus? (Expand on that...What did you learn?) Were you planning on going to college before Campus Connections? What about now?
 - c. Did your feelings about yourself change? In what way?
 - i. Did you gain self-confidence? Tell me about that . . . (What helped?)
 - ii. Did you learn to like yourself more?
 - d. Did Campus Connections help you with your relationships with other people?
 - i. Did your feelings about other people change (Exs: more empathetic, more trusting, think people are nicer than I used to)
 - ii. Did your social skills improve? In what way? How'd that happen?
 - iii. Have you changed the friends you hang out with? In what way? Why? How'd that come about?

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- e. Do you think being in Campus Connections will help you get into less trouble in the future? Tell me about that . . .
 - f. What about your attitudes about drugs and alcohol?
 - g. Did being in Campus Connections change your relationships with your parents and family? In what ways?
4. Did you learn anything new from being involved in Campus Connections? If so, what did you learn?
5. How was your relationship with your mentor? Can you tell me about it?
 - a. What did you learn from your mentor?
 - b. What qualities did you like about mentor?
 - c. Anything you didn't appreciate?
 - d. Did you feel cared about by your mentor?
 - e. Did you trust your mentor?
 - f. What could your mentor have done better?
 - g. Would you like to maintain a relationship with your mentor?
 - h. What was your favorite thing that you did with your mentor?
6. How did you feel about being in a mentor family? Did you connect with other mentors and youth?
7. How did you feel about other mentors and teachers in Campus Connections?
 - a. Other mentors?
 - b. Teachers?
 - c. Youth?
8. What about the atmosphere or climate of Campus Connections?
 - a. Did you feel safe and comfortable?
 - b. Did you get to make decisions?
9. What would you like to change about Campus Connections in order to improve the program? If you could add something to the program, what would it be and why?