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THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL-BASED
MENTORING ON AT-RISK
YOUTH

by
Barbara Dobzanski

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
May 1998

Approved by.

Date Approved 5/5/98

ABSTRACT

Barbara Dobzanski

The Effects of School-Based
Mentoring on At-Risk
Youth

May 1998

Thesis Advisor - John W. Klanderman, Ph. D.

Graduate Program - School Psychology

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of school-based mentoring on at-risk youth. The study was conducted on a group of clients from a Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization. The clients were individuals who are at risk of academic and social failure or difficulty. The experimental group consisted of 21 students who were receiving mentoring services on a weekly basis. The control group consisted of 18 students who remained on a waiting list to be mentored. The variables examined were self-concept, behavioral and developmental issues, and academic performance. The extent, if any, to which mentoring benefits an individual was computed by comparing scores gained through pre and post tests from the experimental group with the control group. T-tests of independent samples were used to determine significance. Only one significant result was found in the area of personal competency. Results suggest that, while there appears to be a positive relationship between mentoring and self-concept, behavior and development, and academic performance, it is not significant when compared to the absence of mentoring.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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The effects on school-based mentoring on at-risk youth were examined by comparing the pre and post test scores of an experimental group receiving mentoring, with the scores of the control group, who remained on a waiting list to be mentored. Only one area of measurement in personal competency yielded a significant result.

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CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

Need

Adolescence is a difficult transition period. Some argue that the years of early adolescence are society's last best chance at preventing social problems (Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). It is at this time that these children are forming fundamental assumptions about society and their potential role in it. These assumptions are largely based on observations and interactions with adults. Support and guidance from these adults are a crucial part of the developmental process.

Despite the important roles that adults play in an adolescent's development, research by Steinberg, 1991, shows that it is uncommon for a youth to have even one significant close relationship with an adult outside the family. The rise in the number of single-parent homes, the deterioration of the neighborhood, and the increased demands of work have left many youth isolated from adults (in Tierney et. al., 1995).

The past decade has seen widespread enthusiasm for mentoring as a way of fighting this isolation and rescuing and protecting the children from various social problems and preparing them to meet life's challenges. The mentoring movement is primarily based on the assumption that if caring, concerned adult role models are available to young people, they will be far more likely to develop into

healthy, successful adults (Tierney, et. al., 1995).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects (positive or negative) of school-based mentoring on at-risk youth. The youth involved in the study were at risk of social and/or academic difficulty or failure. The specific areas that were examined were self-concept, behavioral/developmental issues, and academic performance.

Hypothesis

A significant positive relationship exists between school-based mentoring and an at-risk youth's self-concept, behavior and development, and academic performance.

Historical Information

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, (BB/BSA), is one of the oldest, best known, and most sophisticated mentoring programs in the United States. It is an acknowledged leader in building relationships which unite volunteers and children in hopes of making a positive difference in the lives of these children by assisting them in achieving their highest potential as they grow to become responsible adults.

The organization bases its work on a simple motto - "Our work is as elementary as putting a friend in a child's life , and is as essential as putting hope into a child's future" (Big Brothers/Big Sisters, 1995).

The Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) concept grew from ideas from several different sources. In 1902, the Ladies of Charity of New York, which later became the

Catholic Big Sisters of the Ladies of Charity, began befriending girls brought before the Children's Court. At the same time, Judge Julius Mayer approached and received promises from over 90 influential businessmen to spend time with boys who had appeared before him in the Children's Court. A year later, in Cincinnati, Ohio, Irvin Westheimer took to a young boy and his fatherless family and urged his friends and co-workers to participate in similar activities with other less advantaged boys (Robbins, 1989).

These individual ideas and acts of kindness began to catch on and in 1904, Ernest Coultier, a New York City Court Clerk, organized the Big Brother movement and is recognized as its founder. What each of these individuals shared was a belief that these children weren't criminals, but victims of terrible circumstances. They were children who were basically good and had the potential for success. What they didn't have was a comfortable life and the guidance and friendship of caring adults (Robbins, 1991).

While other agencies were tending to the physical needs of the children, BB/BS was tending to their emotional needs and tried to give back to these children their futures by building relationships based on mutual trust and concern. What they hoped the product of their seemingly simple relationships would be confident children who had a sense of direction (Robbins, 1989).

So, one man's desire to make a difference started a movement that turned into a national organization that currently supports over 100,000 matches across the United States. The national office, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,

sets the criteria and standards that govern the local agencies. These criteria and standards provide a level of uniformity in recruitment, screening, matching, and supervision (Tierney, et. al., 1995). Beyond these standards, each agency is free to respond to the needs of the community in the most appropriate way it can.

What really separates BB/BS from other mentoring organizations is a highly structured program in which each match is supported and supervised by reliable professional staff. Once the guidelines for screening, accepting, and matching clients and volunteers are met, the child and volunteer are given plenty of room to grow and develop their own relationship, always knowing that someone is there if they need help along the way. The caseworker does not direct or control the match. BB/BS counts on the power of friendship to lift a child up. The expectation is that the natural growth and dynamics of a caring, trust filled relationship will generate positive outcomes (Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, 1995).

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Salem County

BB/BS of Salem County began in 1986 when a task force determined a need for its specialized service to children from single parent homes. In 1987, BB/BS of Salem County was fully recognized by BB/BSA and began its recruitment of volunteers and children. In 1991, the agency expanded its traditional one-to-one community based program by instituting school-based mentoring on a pilot basis in one county elementary school. The main difference with this program would be that the matches would only meet at the schools.

In 1992, the agency was awarded a grant by BB/BSA and the Mott Foundation

to expand the school based mentoring program. As a result, mentoring programs were established in three additional county schools and by 1993 three more schools were added. With the help of additional funding, BB/BS of Salem County now has the school-based mentoring program in 12 schools.

Along with the community-based and the school-based programs, BB/BS of Salem County also has a mentoring program called Fenwick Friends that matches high school students with elementary students. While individual matches are made through this program, all matches meet one hour per week after school as a group in a supervised setting.

Program Description: School-Based Mentoring

Big Brothers/Big Sisters school-based mentoring services provide one-to-one matches between adult volunteers and students deemed at risk of academic and/or social difficulty or failure. Children are selected according to pre-established eligibility criteria by school personnel, and following receipt of parental permission, are assessed for program suitability by agency professionals.

Goals for one-to-one intervention are set for each child with specific objectives emphasizing development of positive self-esteem and a sense of personal competency, as well as academic and behavioral achievements.

After a thorough screening and training process, volunteers meet with children on a one-to-one basis for one hour each week at the child's school during the day. Meetings take place in a designated area of the school and include activities which help

the child achieve personal match goals. Matches do not meet outside the school setting except at agency sponsored group activities.

In addition to the complete volunteer/child assessment process, professional training and personalized goal-setting, the BB/BS staff provides regular, consistent supervision of matches through-out the school year. Monthly contact with volunteers, students, and teachers helps to ensure that match objectives are being met and that problems are resolved in a timely manner.

Definitions

1. SELF-CONCEPT: Relatively stable set of self-attitudes reflecting both a description and evaluation of ones own behavior and attributes (Piers & Harris, 1993).
2. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: Students' grades received on report cards.
3. BEHAVIORAL/DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES: Referrals and evaluations of students made by teachers, including areas of physical competence, social competence, personal competence, character, family system, and cognitive competence and academic performance.
4. AT-RISK YOUTH: Students deemed at risk of academic and/or social difficulty or failure.

Assumptions

The experiment conducted was based on the assumptions that the sample is representative of the population, The Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale is a reliable and valid measure of self-concept, the students answer the questions honestly, and that the teachers complete the referral and evaluation forms objectively.

Limitations

The following limitations to the study should be noted: sample size was limited, all subjects were from a preexisting group (BB/BS) and were not randomly assigned to experimental and control groups, students were mentored by different volunteers; the impact that the mentoring had on each child could vary according to style of mentor, acceptance of the mentor by the child, and the willingness of the child to participate, and the final limitation is that the referral and evaluation forms used by the teachers were formulated by BB/BS and are not statistically proven valid or reliable.

Overview

In chapter two, an extensive literature review will be completed on mentoring and its use and effectiveness in a variety of settings.

In chapter three, the design of the study will be presented. This will include a description of the sample, the instruments used to measure self-concept, behavioral/developmental issues, and academic performance, and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data.

Chapter four will include a statistical analysis of the data collected in the specific

areas of measure. The hypotheses will be restated and either accepted or rejected.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Mentoring, an age old concept, has been an informal practice since the beginning of time. The first formal mentoring relationship that took place is credited to Ulysses of Homer's Odyssey, when he entrusted his son's life to a friend, "Mentor" (Ross-Thomas and Bryant, 1994). Since then, formal and informal mentoring has occurred in the lives of many and has included, but has not been limited to teaching, tutoring, coaching, advising, counseling, guiding, role modeling, and inspiring (Allen-Sommerville, 1994).

The theoretical notions behind mentoring, which seek to promote a young person's identification with an adult, rests in the theories of many, including Bandura and his social learning theory, and Erikson's psycho-social theory. Theorists have stressed the importance of relationships and role models in an adolescent's life for a number of years.

Since the time of Odyssey, mentoring programs have been initiated for a number of reasons. In the 1970's, mentoring was emphasized as an instrumental aspect to foster achievement: Mentoring goes corporate. Then in the 1990's, a new wave for

mentoring appeared and focused on young people growing up in poverty: Mentoring goes private. Today, mentoring programs take on a number of approaches in business and community, work and careers, and schools and universities (Freedman, 1991).

Whatever the reason or purpose, all mentoring programs have similar goals - to motivate and equip people with the tools necessary to becoming fully functioning individuals - personally, academically, or professionally (Allen-Sommerville, 1994). Freedman states that there is a trio of essential elements that lie at the heart of any mentoring project: achievement, nurturance, and generativity (1991).

Despite the fact that mentoring is an age old concept and that most would agree that there is a great need to have role models in one's life in order to successfully develop, there is not a great deal of research that has been done on the effects of mentoring in the various settings.

This chapter will review some of the research that has been conducted on mentoring. The focus will be on research that has been done on the effects of mentoring in the school setting. The chapter will then expand to discuss the role that mentoring has played in the workplace and will end with a small discussion about new age mentoring - telementoring.

Mentoring and Big Brothers/Big Sisters

Tierney and Grossman, in 1995, did a major study on the impact of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. The purpose of their study was to determine whether

mentoring made a tangible difference in the lives of young people. The research focused on six areas that were previously cited as having been affected by mentoring: antisocial activities; academic performance, attitudes and behaviors; relationships with families; relationships with friends; self-concept; and social and cultural enrichment.

They did a comparative study on 959 subjects, ages 10-16, who had applied to various Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Half were assigned to a treatment group in which actual matches with adults were made, while the other half, the control group, was assigned to a waiting list. Pre and post tests were administered and the two groups were compared after 18 months.

The overall findings were very positive: 46% were less likely than controls to initiate drug use during this period; 27% were less likely than controls to initiate alcohol use; 33% were less likely than controls to hit another. The experimental group also skipped half as many days in school, felt more competent about their schoolwork, and showed modest gains in grade point average over controls. It was also found that the quality of relationships with both parents and peers improved. There was no significant difference found in self-concept or social and cultural enrichment.

The research presents clear and encouraging evidence about the power that a caring relationship can have. It should be noted that these findings should not be generalized to all mentoring settings. The results were taken from the effects of mentoring in experienced, specialized programs that adhere to well-developed standards. If these standards can be duplicated in similar programs, it would appear that similar results could be found and expansion of similar programs would prove a strong investment for society.

Another study of a Big Brother program was conducted in 1996 by Turner and Scherman that reveal results that lend support to the notion that involvement in a social support system can be beneficial. The study focused on boys who were from single-parent families and was conducted in a similar fashion to Tierney and Grossman's study comparing boys matched to those not matched. They were looking for changes in self-concept and behavior.

Using pre and post-tests, results indicated that boys who were matched had higher self concepts than those who were not matched. No significant difference was found in the behavior.

Abbott, Meredith, Self-Kelly, and Davis, 1997, recently conducted a study on Big Brothers/Big Sisters. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of mentoring on self-competence, academic performance, behavioral problems, and parent-child relations. The subjects were 44 boys, ages 8-14, who were from single-parent families in which the mother was the head-of-the house. Again, the boys were split into a treatment (those matched with a big brother) and control (those on a waiting list) group. Pre and post-tests were performed.

Results were not consistent with previous findings that suggested children in non-nuclear families often benefit from the companionship of an adult friend. No significant differences were found between the two groups in any of the dependent measures. In fact, results revealed a decrease in school performance by the boys who were matched!

Mentoring in the Schools

While specific elements of school-based mentoring may vary, the improvement of academic competence and the enhancement of the self are two of the more common goals. For students, mentoring enables them to identify and practice new skills, be creative and explore new ideas, receive positive reinforcement, share concerns, and make exciting progress towards the future (Allen-Sommerville, 1997).

Roberts and Cotton, 1994, conducted a study to determine if mentoring would affect a high school student's self-esteem and grade point average. There were 76 subjects, 30 male and 46 female, all 11th graders. The treatment group received the mentoring and pre and post tests were done. The results showed that although the scores for the treatment group were somewhat higher on these measures, there was no significant differences between the two groups. A limitation of this study was that the length of the experimental period was only three months.

LaSalle Academy, a private school in Providence, Rhode Island, has created a comprehensive social and emotional learning program called "Success for Life" that incorporates the teaching of these skills in all subjects. Part of this program involves the students participating in activities like Big Brothers/Big Sisters. They have also appointed the faculty to work as counselors for individual students with behavior problems. Other activities involved in the program are peer mediation, faculty advisor programs, and senior service learning. The overall goal of the school is to provide the students with whatever it takes to help them succeed in school and beyond (Pasi, 1997).

The faculty at Smoky Hills High School in California is very concerned with teaching their students about caring relationships and the positive affect that they have on school. In an article by Jarvis (1996), it is explained how they have gone about to accomplish this goal. They started an adopt a senior program that matches seniors who are at risk of not graduating with a staff member. The students are allowed to pick their mentors, which the school feels is the major component of the program's success. Allowing the student to choose fosters their interest and commitment in the program.

The results of the program have been extremely positive: in the past five years, the graduation rate has steadily risen since the program was started.

Another goal of school based mentoring is to control the dropout rate of students. This goal is successfully being tackled by a high school in El Camino, California who has implemented a mentoring program at their school (NEA Today, 1996). This program not only includes individualized training activities on academics, but also incorporates field trips, lunches, and parenting workshops into the overall plan.

Teachers, and other staff members acted as the initial mentors and when there weren't enough to go around, the seniors offered to be mentors to the freshman. The results were astounding and there was a substantial impact on the success of all students involved. Dozens improved their failing grades and the discipline problems were cut in half.

Mentoring at the College Level

Bettencourt and Fraser (1994), conducted a study on psychology graduate

students and the possibility of them being mentors to undergraduates. The results were based on surveys completed by staff and students to determine if they felt mentoring programs could be beneficial at the university. The advantages of setting up a mentoring program outweighed the disadvantages and most felt that this type of program would benefit both the mentor, the graduate student, and the mentee, the undergraduate.

The undergraduate would learn more about the field, plan more explicit career goals, develop strategies to achieve these goals, and gain valuable experience by assisting in research. The graduate student would also benefit by improving leadership skills and receiving help with their research.

Mentoring in England

A number of educational institutions in England have implemented mentoring programs at their schools for a number of reasons. In Sheffield, the Hinde House School, which is located in a fairly deprived area of England, started a mentoring program for its Asian girls (Spencer, 1997). Research had shown that African American and Asian girls lacked role models. Because of this, they were very dissatisfied with their academic and personal lives. Administration felt they needed to do something about this problem and started a mentoring program where they matched these girls with mentors who visited them once a week for an hour. The volunteers are women from similar backgrounds.

The matches do a variety of things together and the program has been a huge

success. The girls have shown great improvement in social and academic areas and now have confidence about the prospects that lie ahead. The program has been so successful, that they would like to extend it to include other students (Spencer, 1997).

Another school in Chelsford, England, was finding major discrepancies between the academic performance of the sexes and launched a crusade that involved mentoring and peer counseling to combat the problem (Carleton, 1997). Boys in the 9th grade who were considered to be underachievers were given the peer counselors. The two worked together throughout the year with the goal to get the pupil to become interested in school and his academic performance. The mentoring program was set up for the 10th graders who were allowed to choose a mentor from the staff. The two met to discuss work, do homework, and talk about anything else that they had on their mind.

The results, based on observations by the staff and on grades, indicated that there was a slight improvement in the academic performance of these individuals.

Overall, it has changed the students attitudes about work and they now feel as if they have a reason to try hard and aren't as influenced by their friends anymore (Carleton, 1997).

Corporate Mentoring

While mentoring has been used effectively in a number of corporate settings, many in the field have felt that there has not been equal opportunities for all individuals to participate in the act. Reid (1994) has stressed a concern about the issue of equal access to this learning relationship. He felt that mentoring was a great way to help companies promote diversity in the workplace and ensure equal opportunities to all

employees.

In researching a Chicago based firm, Reid found that 80% of the respondents indicated that they had mentors. What he also found was that these individuals had more advanced degrees, engaged in more extensive career planning, received a slightly higher pay, and were more personally satisfied with their position. His findings were positive, but his concern lied in the fact that these individuals were executives, the majority being male and white.

Reid, 1991, strongly urged that mentoring be built into the companies human resources and should be offered to every employee. They need to set up a formal mentoring program to ensure that the women and minorities are given an equal opportunity to be mentored. What distinguishes these formal operations from the informal mentoring is that in the informal approach, the relationships formed on their own and those white, male executives were found more likely to choose protégés of similar race and sex.

He also cited six principles that he felt are the main components of a successful mentoring program that have the acronym MENTOR: Modeling, Educating, Networking, Trust, Organization and Recognition. With the implementation of these elements into the mentoring process, the development of the entire work force can take place.

Heery, in 1994, also explored the effects of corporate mentoring and found that it does promote diversity and helps women and minorities break into positions that were traditionally held by white males. While his goals were similar to Reid's, his approach

was a little different. He felt that the corporations needed to implement a team-to-team mentoring approach rather than focus on the one-on-one situation. This way, all positions would have a better chance to be involved.

Mentoring and the Teaching Profession

No matter what job you enter, you have responsibilities that you must face. In some professions, your responsibilities are limited with respect to your knowledge and experience. But this is not true when it comes to education. New teachers entering schools are faced with the challenge of performing all or most of the duties of veteran teachers. This is a great deal for anyone to take on. A number of individuals have researched ways to make this transition a little easier on these new teachers.

One way that this can be done is through mentoring and a number of schools have incorporated this concept into the curriculum by matching newly hired teachers with experienced individuals. Clement, 1995, reports on ways that mentors can help. She refers to providing guidance, answering questions, and basically coaching the new teacher to success. As mentors, they help the new teachers find things, make resources available, share ideas of communicating with the students and parents, share classroom management plans and teaching strategies, and update them on what's new and what works. In doing these things, the new teachers will be more confident and successful in dealing with all of the responsibilities that come with teaching. The overall impact is on the entire school.

Another report was done by Ganser, 1995, on the benefits of mentoring in the teaching profession. His focus was on the selection and matching process. While he

himself was an advocate of mentoring in the field and felt that improving the experience of beginning teachers by mentoring is an important part of the professional development, he stressed the importance of the selection of mentors and the matching process.

He cited the following criteria as essential in the selection process: competency of the teacher, experience (at least 8-15 years), willingness, commitment, and enthusiasm, experience working with other adults, and his or her view on teaching as a job. Once these types of individuals were sought out, they should be carefully matched with the new teachers on additional criteria. These criteria included similar teaching assignments (level and content), compatibility of ideas about teaching, children, and learning, and the accessibility to one another (Ganser, 1995).

Mentoring in the Nursing Field

In years past, mentoring has frequently been related to supplying support in various leadership roles, but has been extended to include a number of other positions in the work force that include all positions that deal with the interactions of others. The medical field is an area that many believe mentoring can prove beneficial at all levels.

Nurses play a crucial role in the daily routines of all medical areas. Groah, 1996, published an article about her strong support of mentoring and the need for it with nurses. In her research, she has found that, in general, nurses who have had mentors are more confident in their work and more satisfied with the profession they

have chosen. Nursing mentors can provide novice nurses with guidance and support, enhance education, and help them ease into their new profession. Mentors foster growth, both professionally and personally, and can help mold novices into self-assured, competent workers. Mentoring can provide a balance between what these novices learned through textbooks and education and reality.

While Groah is a strong advocate of mentoring, she also points out negative aspects that can and will occur if proper supervision of this mentoring does not take place. These pitfalls are: oppressive control, overdependence, exploitation, mentor clones, smothering, envy, and excessive altruism.

Groah puts the responsibility of mentoring on the experienced nurses and feels that it is their duty as professionals to want to help others. In mentoring, one can show his or her support for the profession and his or her commitment to the job. These novices will eventually be a part of the team and will affect that team in a positive or negative way. The stronger the individuals, the stronger the team. The overall goal: improve patient satisfaction.

Mentoring and Social Work

Little research has been done about the effects of mentoring in the social service field. Social workers of all colors are needed to better serve such a diverse client population. Collins, in 1994 and 1997, conducted research to see how social workers can better serve the communities. What she really wanted to find out was if mentoring, an idea that had been so widely used in other professions, was occurring in this field and if so, what effect does it have, if any, on service.

In her first study in 1994, she explored the career outcomes of 430 social workers who had been both a mentor and protégé, a mentor but not a protégé, a protégé but not a mentor, or neither. The measures that she used were career success, career satisfaction, and income level.

Results indicated that there was a significant impact for both protégés and mentors in the areas of career success and career satisfaction. The highest level of significance occurred for individuals who had been both protégé and mentor. The outcome for income level was only significant for those who had been mentors.

Collins led a second study with Kanya and Tourse, in 1997 that explored views on mentor relationships and racial diversity. While their results indicated that race was not significantly related to being mentored, her and her colleagues did find a significant association between the race of the protégés and the mentors they chose.

Mentoring and Journalism

Clark, 1993, expressed the importance of having a mentor and urged that anyone in this field seek out someone to mentor them. Journalism is a difficult field to enter into - everyone has their own style and perspectives and much of their work is drawn from personal experiences. Despite all of the recent talk about the benefits of mentoring to any novice, there isn't much practical instruction to be found for journalist students.

He stressed the fact that journalists need others to pass on experience and wisdom that can not be found in books or manuals. Older journalists can supply those

just staring out with insights that these novices might never have thought of. The result is an independent journalist who will be able to combine his or her style with the practical instruction of someone who has been there.

The New Age: On-line Mentoring

Computers are everywhere now-a-days and are seen by many as a necessity of functioning through the day. We use them for many reasons, both personal and professional. So what does a computer have to do with mentoring? Enter the age of telementoring. Telementoring is an innovative teaching aid that connects students with researchers and experts in various fields who provide information and interact with the students through the computer.

One such program, developed by Rory Wager, a science teacher, has reaped many benefits. In a study conducted on his classroom (O'Neil, Wagner, and Gomez, 1996), telementoring has had the advantage of diffusing stereotypes of the adult working world, producing enriched conversation and learning, and creating intellectual resources for the students. The other advantage, seen by the teacher, has been that he or she has more time to spend supporting students in other ways.

As with traditional mentoring, telementoring also brings some problems. The one problem, which has been a constant problem for most mentoring programs is finding the volunteers. The other problem is the cost of setting up such a system in the schools. Despite these drawbacks, a growing number of researchers and teachers are looking into this concept and taking advantage of this new avenue to help the students.

Summary

Although a lot of the research done on mentoring has reported a variety of findings, the majority suggest that mentoring relationships have positive effects. One must be careful in generalizing any finding because programs vary so much and are usually set up by that specific institution with specific goals in mind. What works for some people might not work for others and programs should be set up to fit the needs of the individuals or the community.

It is definitely necessary to continue the research on this topic and is important to note that caring relationships have long been accepted as a necessary part of proper growth and any variable that increases these relationships should be enforced.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Sample

The subjects used were adolescents enrolled in a school-based mentoring program with a small South Jersey Big Brothers/Big Sisters agency. All clients served through this program are referred to the agency by local school systems. These individuals are mainly referred because they are considered to be at risk of academic and/or social difficulty or failure.

Upon referral, each student must go through a screening process with the agency. This process includes completion of a teacher referral form, review of the latest report card, teacher interview, child interview, and the administration of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Once a student is accepted into the program, he or she is placed on a waiting list to be matched with a mentor. The agency tries to match each of these students with a mentor based on availability of a mentor. While each child basically has the same chance at being matched, matches are not made on a random basis. Caseworkers with the agency match children with mentors who they feel can best meet that child's particular needs. Other factors that are also considered are sex, race, age, and common interests. While the

mentor has the opportunity to select a child from an anonymous group, children initially have no say with whom they are matched.

The total number of subjects in this experiment was 39. The group consisted of 29 males and 10 females. The ages of the subjects ranged from 8 to 14, with the average age being 11.4. The group consisted of 28 African Americans, 7 Caucasians, 2 Hispanics, and 2 bi-racial clients. Grade level of the subjects ranged from third grade to eighth grade, with the mode grade being fifth. Of these 39 subjects, 13 were classified as special education. Of the remaining 26, 10 received some type of basic skills instruction. See tables 3.1 through 3.5 for a further breakdown of these categories.

Other situations that were examined were living arrangement and household income. Of the 39 subjects, 21 lived with their mothers, 1 with his father, 2 with mom and dad, 5 with a grandparent, 4 with an aunt/uncle, and the remaining 6 lived in other arrangements. Pertaining to the household income, 11 came from an income of \$10,000 or less, 21 from \$10,000 – \$24,999, 5 from \$25,000 - \$39,999, and 2 from an income of \$40,000 or more. See tables 3.6 and 3.7 for further breakdown in these categories.

The sample used in this design was broken into an experimental and a control group based on two pre-existing groups from the agency. Those subjects who were matched with a mentor would be the experimental group and those that were waiting to be matched would serve as the control group.

Eligibility Considerations

1. Any client whose initial screening process was not fully complete was excluded.

TABLE 3.1

GENDER

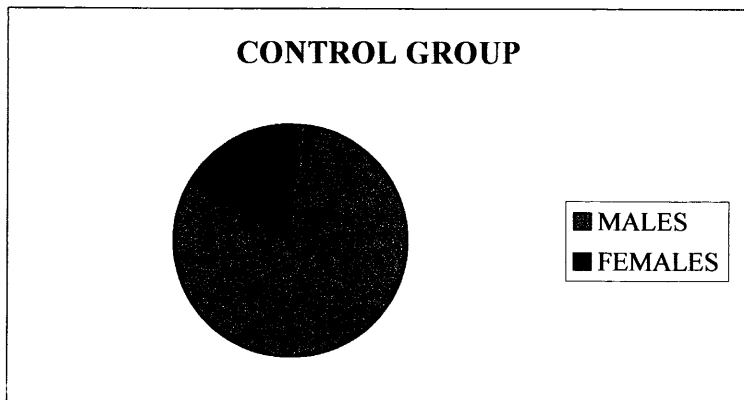
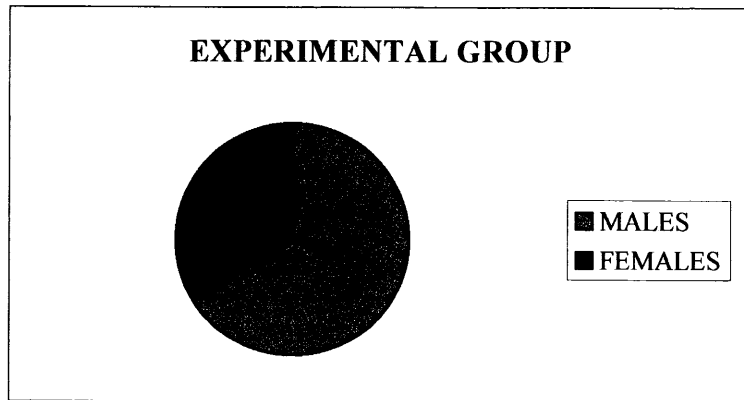
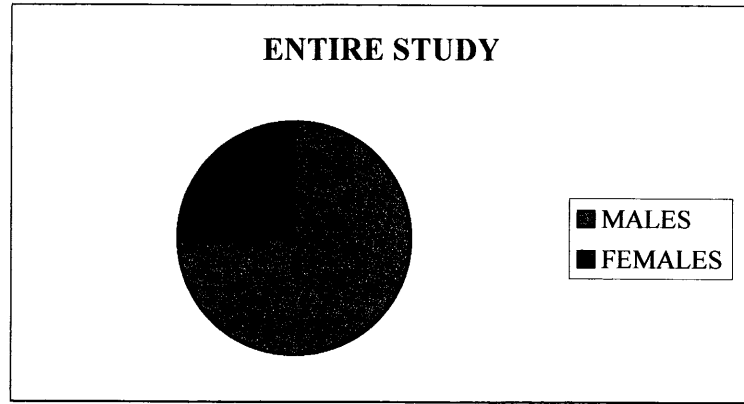


TABLE 3.2

AGE

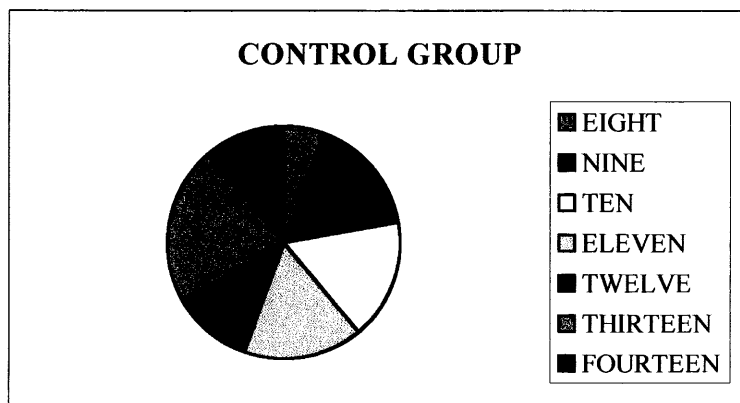
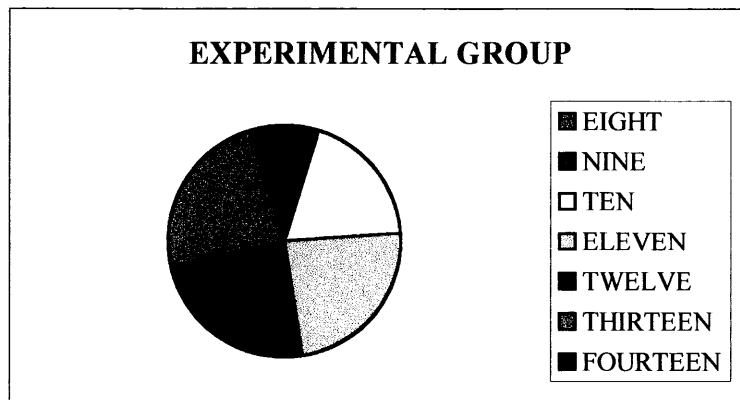
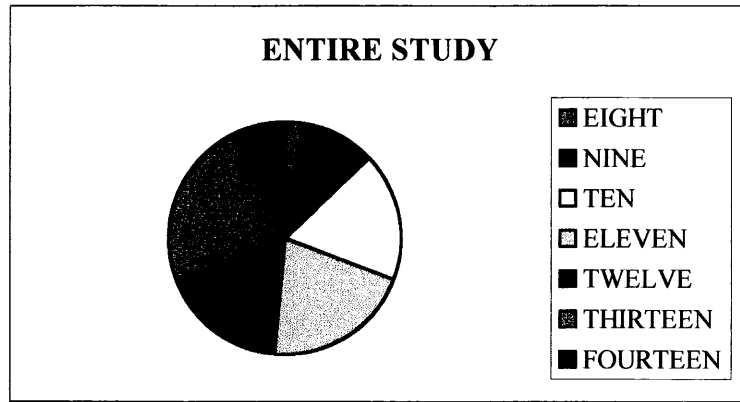


TABLE 3.3

RACE

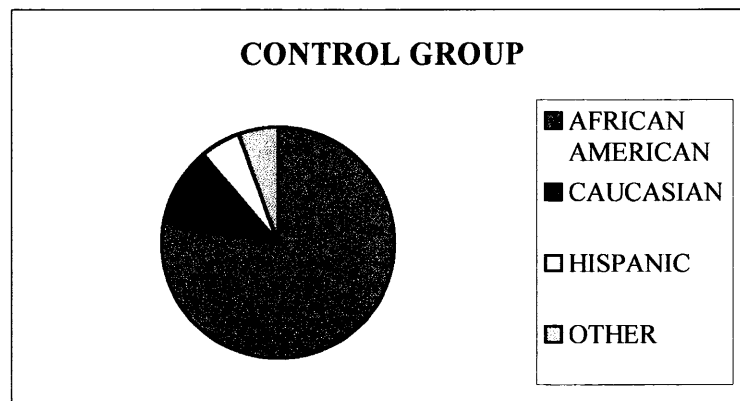
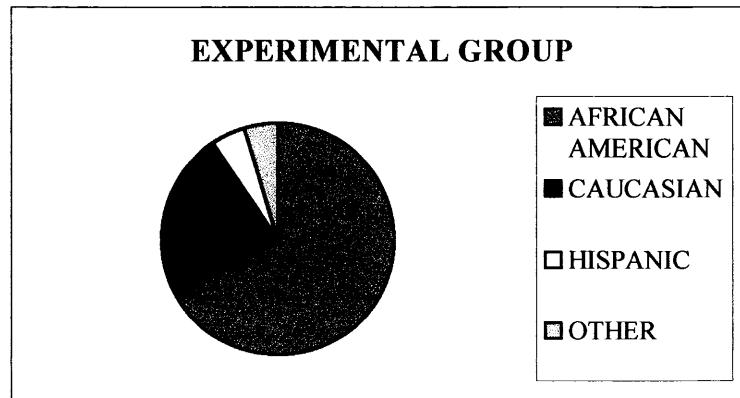
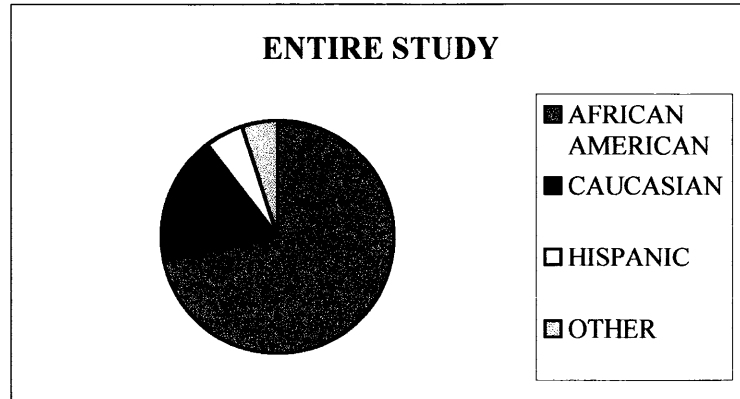


TABLE 3.4

GRADE

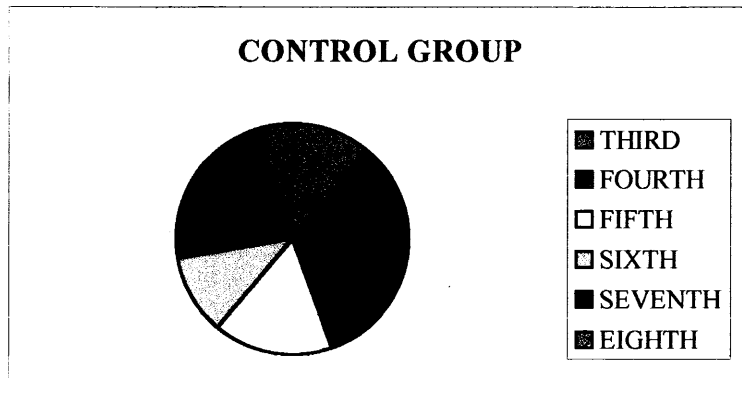
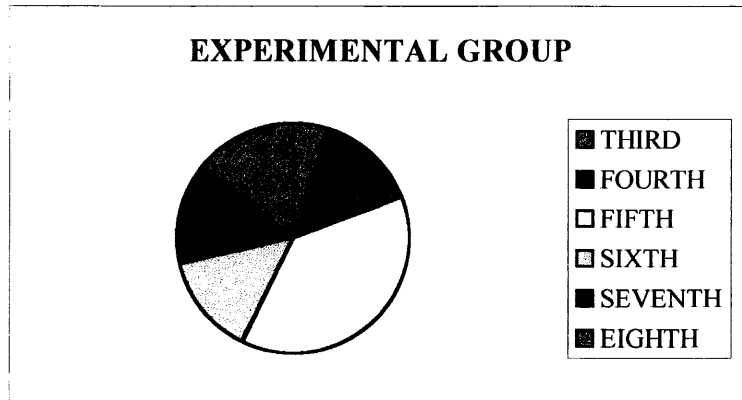
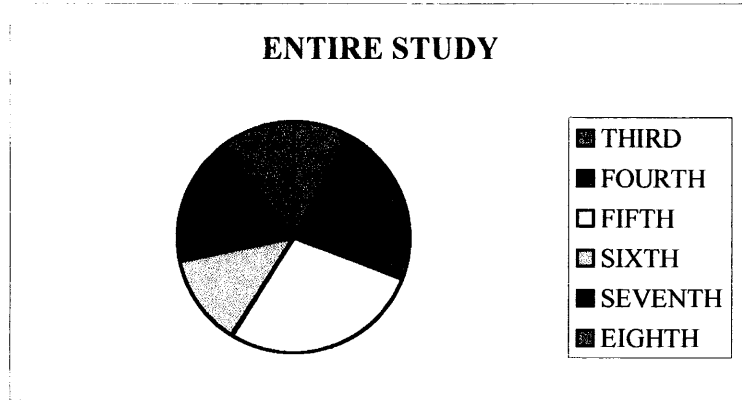


TABLE 3.5

SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION

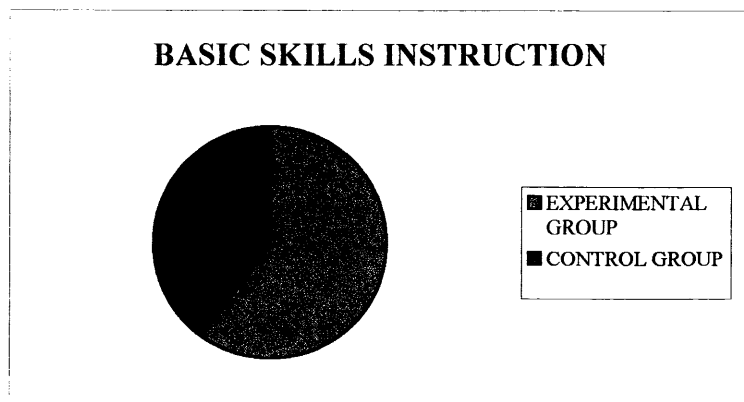
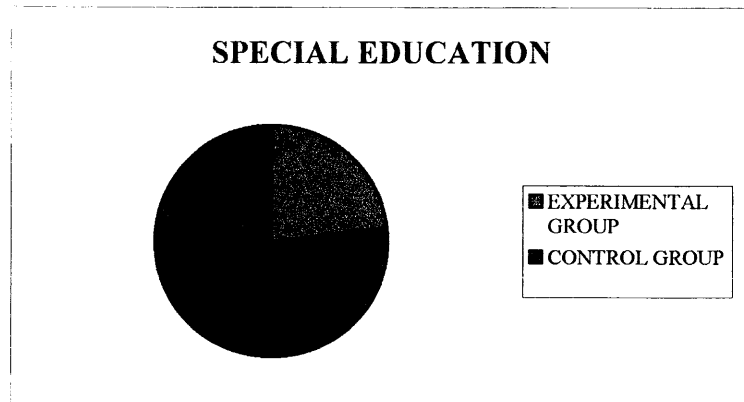


TABLE 3.6

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

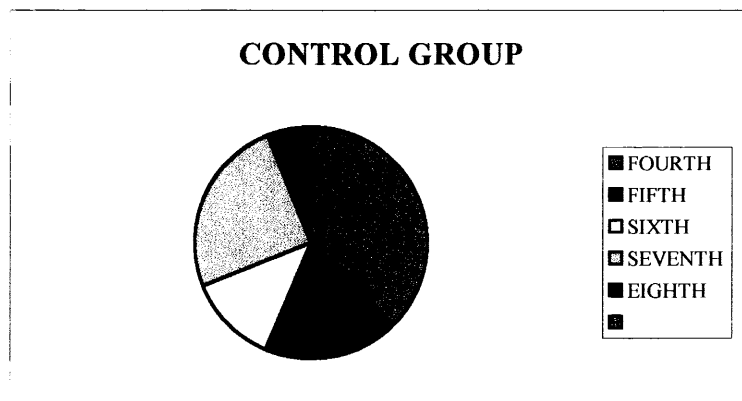
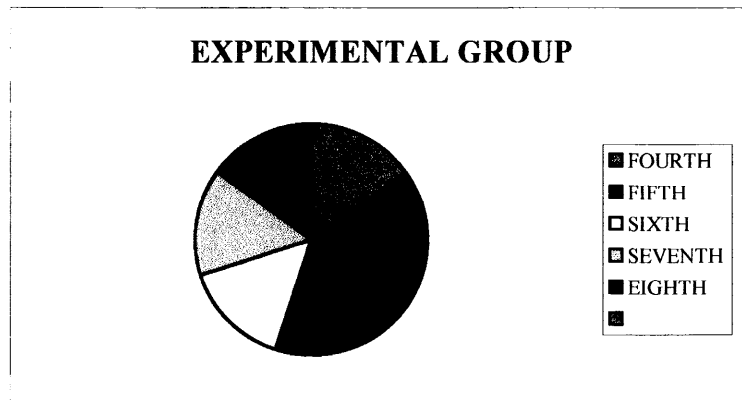
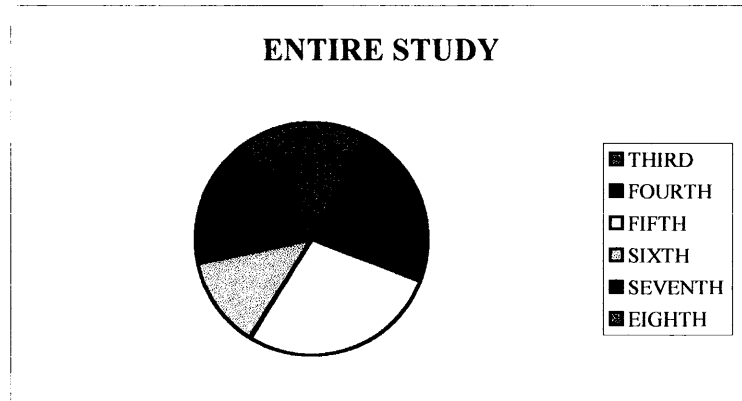
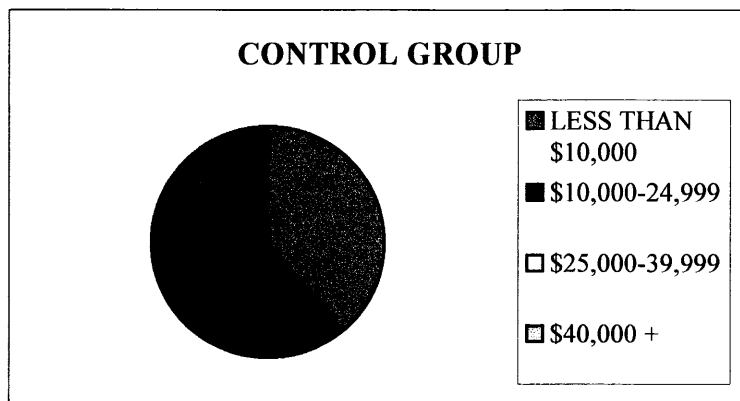
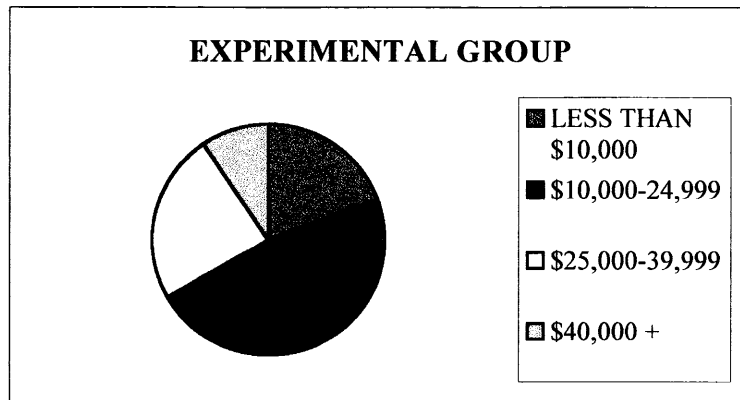
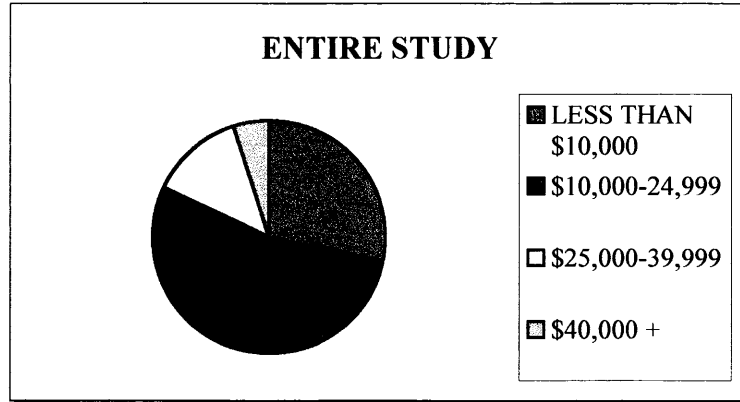


TABLE 3.7

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



2. Any client who was matched for less than a year was excluded from the experimental group.
3. Any client who was waiting for less than a year was excluded from the control group.
4. Any client below 3rd grade was excluded.

Measures

Three different measures were used in this experiment. These measures were the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, Big Brothers/Big Sisters Child Referral and Evaluation Form, and grades. These particular measures are used by the agency in the screening process and follow-ups. They are used by the agency to assess a child's needs and help establish goals for a match.

The Piers-Harris, designed in 1964, is an 80 item self-report questionnaire designed to assess how a child feels about him or herself. An overall assessment of self-concept is computed by the total score, but the scale also has six cluster scales that specifically look at behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction (Piers & Harris, 1993).

The test is fairly easy to administer and score. The children are shown statements that tell how some children feel about themselves and asked to say whether or not the statements apply to them by answering "yes" or "no".

The Piers-Harris is considered to be a highly reliable and valid instrument and compares favorably to other measures of personality traits in children (Piers & Harris,

1993). The test-retest reliability has been studied by a number of individuals and ranges from a coefficient of .42 (with an 8-month interval) to .96 (with a 3-4 week interval). Median reliability coefficient is .73. Internal reliability was also looked at and ranged from .88 - .93.

A note should be made here about the limitations of the Piers-Harris. Due to the self-report nature of the scale, scores are subject to both conscious and unconscious distortions made by children usually in the direction of more socially desirable responses. These distortions can also include faking and random response. To combat these problems, the Piers-Harris also includes an inconsistency index and a response bias index to help determine the validity of scores. Other variables that may influence the scores are reading level and academic achievement of the child (Piers & Harris, 1993).

The second measure used was a referral form that was established by the Big Brothers/Big Sisters (see Appendix A). The teacher of the child being referred to the agency completes this form. The form uses a likert scale (from one, being poor, to five, being superior) intended to evaluate the child in various competency areas. These areas include physical, social, and personal competence. Character, family system, and cognitive competence and academic performance are also measured. The forms that are used at posttest time are the same except they are called progress evaluation forms (see Appendix B).

While no studies have been done on these forms to measure reliability and validity, Big Brothers/Big Sisters feels that it is a very accurate way to assess a child's school performance and behavior. Because the teacher completing the form is the one

who has referred the child, the agency feels that they will be as honest as possible about the child's abilities because they want to help that child.

The third measure used was grades obtained from report cards. Each letter grade was assigned a corresponding numerical grade in order to make computations easier. An "A" was equal to a 4, a "B" a 3 and on down the line to an "F" equaling a 0. It should be noted that report cards and grades might not be an accurate measure of academics success.

Design/Procedure

The effect of having a mentor on a youth was determined in this experimental design by evaluating two pre-existing groups of adolescents. The experimental group was subjects who were matched with a mentor and the experimental group was subjects who were waiting to be matched. Pre and posttests were done to determine whether or not mentoring would affect a child in the areas of self-concept, behavioral and developmental issues, and academic performance,

Pretest data already existed in all of the subjects' files. It is the policy of the agency to do evaluations following a period of one year on all children matched so some post-data was also pre-existing. Posttests are not done on waiting list children so evaluation forms were sent to the current teachers of the children on the waiting list. The Piers-Harris was administered to all subjects in the control group. Latest report cards of control subjects were also obtained and evaluated.

Testable Hypotheses

Null: No difference in self-concept will be found between mentored and non-mentored groups.

Alternative: Subjects who are mentored will show greater increase in levels of self-concept than those who are not mentored.

Null: No difference in behavior and development issues will be found between mentored and non-mentored groups.

Alternative: Subjects who are mentored will show greater increase in display of positive behavior and development than those who are not mentored.

Null: No difference in academic performance will be found between mentored and non-mentored groups.

Alternative: Subjects who are mentored will show greater increase in academic performance than those who are not mentored.

Analysis

Three independent t-tests were done with the three measures (Piers-Harris, BB/BS forms, and report cards). Comparisons were made between the experimental group and the control group based on the scores from the pre and posttests.

Summary

There were 39 subjects, 18 in the control group and 21 in the experimental group, examined to determine whether or not school-based mentoring has an effect on self-

concept, behavior and development, and academic performance. Pre and posttests were done using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, BB/BS Referral/Evaluation Forms, and report cards to determine this effect. An analysis was done using independent t-tests on all three measures. Comparisons were made between the control and experimental group t-test results. The goal of the research was to find a positive correlation between school-based mentoring and self-concept, behavior and development, and academic performance. The results will be discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

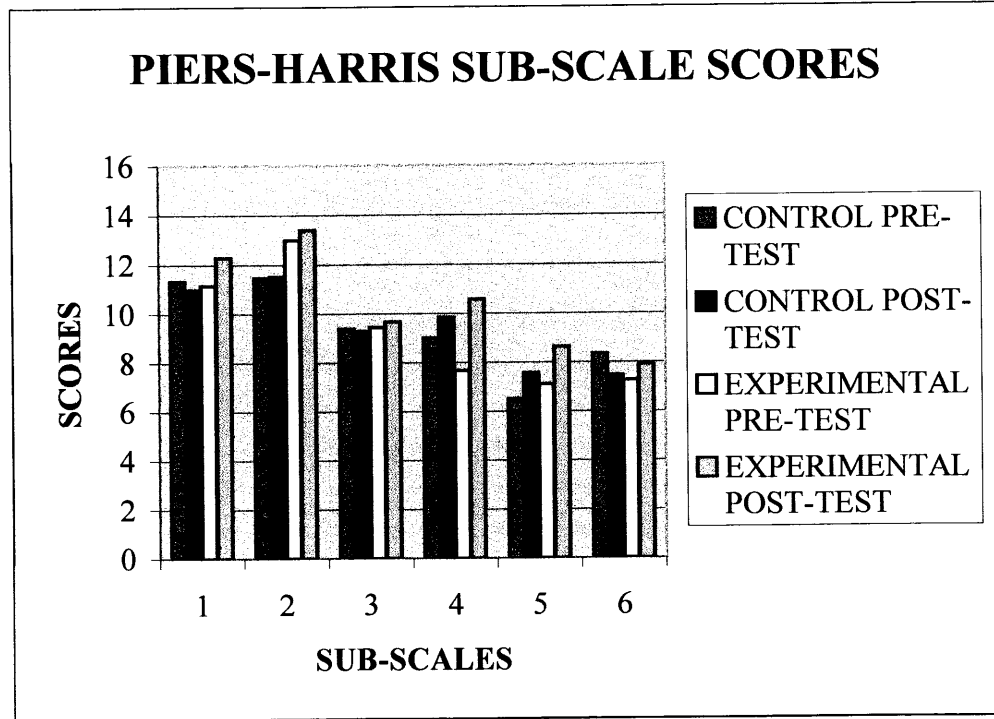
The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of school-based mentoring on at-risk youth. It was hypothesized that a positive relationship exists between school based mentoring and a youth's self concept, behavior/development, and academic performance. The extent to which mentoring benefits an individual was computed by comparing scores gained through pre and post tests from the experimental group, students who are mentored, with the scores of the control group, students who remained on a waiting list to be mentored.

Interpretation of Results

Self-Concept

The first variable that was examined at was self-concept. Self-concept was measured by using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. While the students who were mentored did have an increase in self-concept, it was not significant when compared to the control group. As displayed in Table 4.1, the experimental group showed an increase in mean on all sub-scales of the Piers-Harris, while the control group

TABLE 4.1



SUB-SCALES

1 - BEHAVIOR

2 - INTELLECTUAL & SCHOOL STATUS

3 - PHYSICAL APPEARANCE & ATTRIBUTES

4 - ANXIETY

5 - POPULARITY

6 - HAPPINESS & SATISFACTION

only improved in two areas. The experimental group also showed an increase in total score on the Piers-Harris, while the control group actually showed a decrease in score (See Table 4.2).

Behavior/Development

The second variable that was researched was behavior/development. Issues of behavior and development were evaluated by the teachers of the individuals. The only scale in this measure that produced significant post-test results when comparing the two groups was personal competency ($t(37) = -2.266, p < .05$). Again, as seen in table 4.3, the experimental group did show an increase in score on all categories except character, while the control group only increased in 2 areas.

Academic Performance

The third variable examined was academic performance. This performance was based on grades. No significant difference was found between the two groups. As indicated in Table 4.4, both groups only showed slight improvements of almost equal increments.

Summary

The results of this study suggest that, while there appears to be a positive relationship between mentoring and self-concept, behavior/development, and grades, it is not significantly different when compared to the absence of mentoring. Only one out of

TABLE 4.2

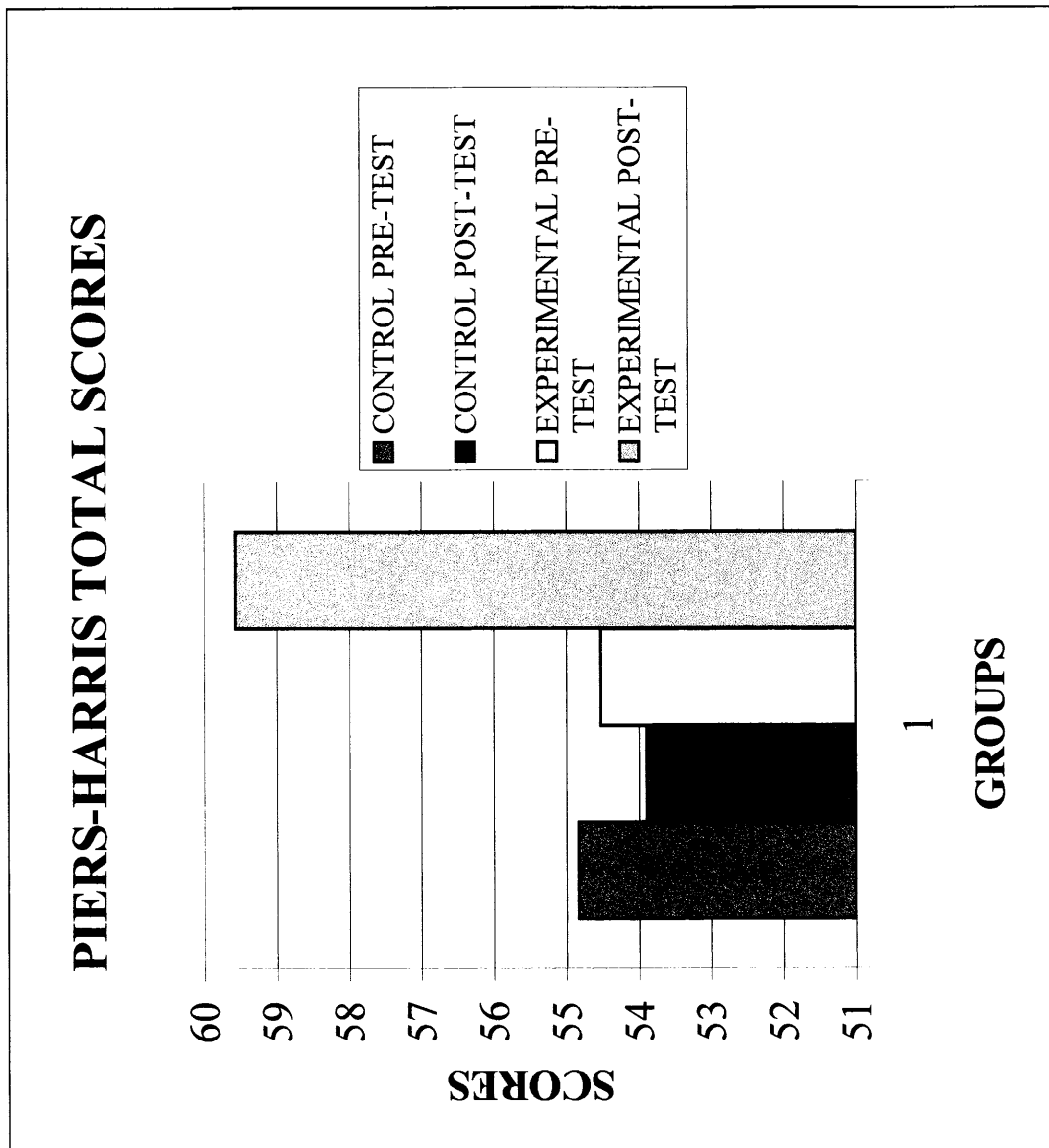
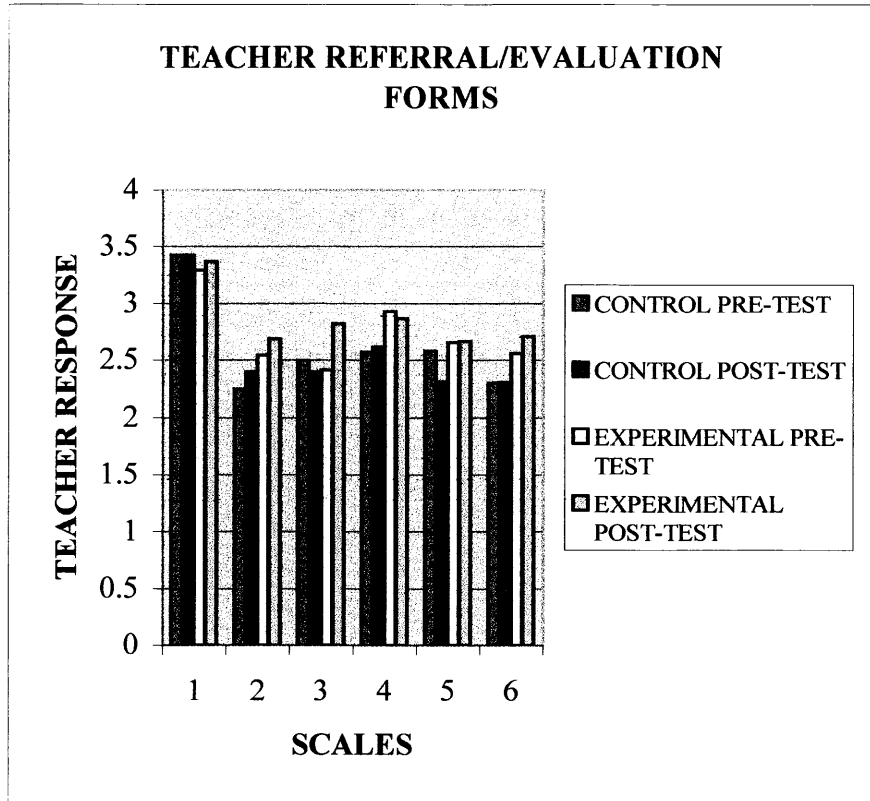


TABLE 4.3



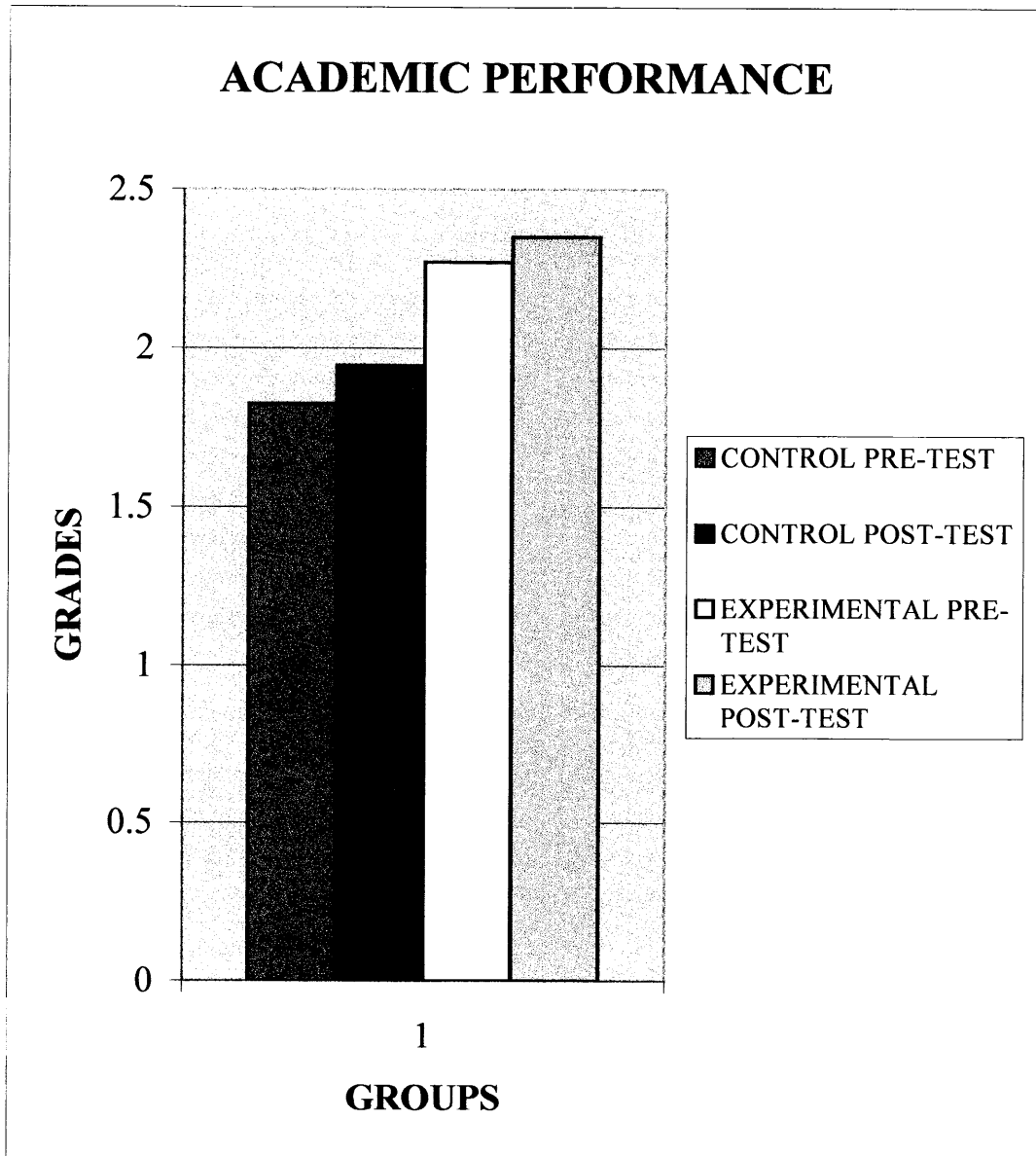
TEACHER RESPONSE

- 1 - POOR
- 2 - BELOW AVERAGE
- 3 - AVERAGE
- 4 - ABOVE AVERAGE
- 5 - SUPERIOR

SCALES

- 1 - PHYSICAL COMPETENCE
- 2 - SOCIAL COMPETENCE
- 3 - PERSONAL COMPETENCE
- 4 - CHARACTER
- 5 - FAMILY SYSTEM
- 6 - COGNITIVE COMPETENCE

TABLE 4.4



GRADES

4 - "A" 3 - "B" 2 - "C" 1 - "D" 0 - "F"

fourteen areas that were looked at yielded a significant result.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of school-based mentoring on at-risk youth. The study was conducted on a group of clients from a Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization. The clients were individuals who are at risk of academic and/or social failure or difficulty. The experimental group consisted of 21 students who were receiving mentoring services on a weekly basis. The control group consisted of 18 students who remained on a waiting list to be mentored. The variables examined were self-concept, behavioral and developmental issues, and academic performance. The extent, if any, to which mentoring benefits an individual was computed by comparing scores gained through pre and post tests from the experimental group with the control group.

T-tests of independent samples were used to determine significance. Only one significant result was found in the area of personal competency. Results suggest that, while there appears to be a positive relationship between mentoring and self-concept,

behavior and development, and academic performance, it is not significant when compared to the absence of mentoring.

Conclusions

Despite the lack of significant results that were yielded from this study when comparing the two groups together, it should be noted that mentoring did have a positive effect on the sampled youth. The experimental group showed improvements in all of the three dependent measures examined.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale yielded very positive posttest results in all sub-scales and overall score for the experimental group, while the control group only increased in two areas. The Big Brothers/Big Sisters Evaluation Forms yielded the one significant result in personal competency. But it should be noted that the experimental group increased its scores in all but one area of behavioral and developmental issues, while the control group again only improved in two areas.

Discussion

The present study lends support to previous research that has been conducted on the effects of mentoring in the school system. Because of the increase in posttest scores that was seen in the experimental group, it lends support to the research that has found mentoring to be beneficial to children (Tierney, et. al., 1995, Turner & Scherman, 1996, Allen-Sommerville, 1997, NEA Today, 1996). On the other hand, the lack of significance of the scores of the experimental group when compared to the control group lends support to other research that has found mentoring to make no difference in a

child's life (Abbott, et. al., 1997, Roberts & Cotton, 1994, Jarvis 1996).

Caring relationships have long been accepted as a necessary part of proper growth and development. Because of the contradictory results that have been yielded from many studies done on mentoring, further action should be taken to determine its effectiveness. If mentoring is a way of supplying a child with a caring relationship, then further research needs to be done in this area to determine the ways in which a mentor can make a difference.

Implications for Future Research

The present study suggests that there is no significance between mentoring and an at-risk youth's self-concept, behavior and development, and academic performance. The lack of significant results could be a product of many of the limitations that the study carried with it.

The present study used a sample that was limited in size and one that was not randomly selected. It was also a sample of clients who were already deemed at risk of academic and/or social failure. Future research should include a larger sample that is randomly chosen and should include all types of children, not just those in desperate need of additional help.

Posttests were performed a year after the child was mentored. One year may not be long enough for significant increases in scores to be displayed. It has been noted by Big Brothers/Big Sisters Volunteers that it can take years before his or her mentee acknowledges the importance of their relationship. Future research should allow for a

greater length of time in between tests or should include follow-ups after matches have ended.

The present study used grades received on report cards as the measure to assess academic performance. Grades may not be an accurate measure of academic success. Grades can be greatly affected by the teacher giving them and are not always objective. Future research should attempt to use a more accurate measure or to combine other measures with the grades.

The referral and evaluation forms that were used to measure behavioral and developmental issues were established by Big Brothers/Big Sisters and have not been standardized or statistically proven reliable or valid in any way. Other well established, reliable, valid tests should be used in future research.

A final note should be made about future implications of the role of mentoring. Scores or grades do not always show accurate measures of how a variable affects a child's life. The way a child feels about a certain thing may not be displayed in his or her actions or words to others. Because of this fact, future research should include the feelings that the children have about their mentoring experiences. No one could tell you better the ways in which a mentor has helped or hindered his or her life than that child.

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APPENDIX A

BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS OF SALEM COUNTY

CHILD REFERRAL FORM

Date

(Child's Name)

(Grade)

(Length of Association)

Please evaluate this child in the following competency areas.

<u>PHYSICAL COMPETENCE</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
GROSS MOTOR SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
FINE MOTOR SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
PERSONAL HYGIENE	5	4	3	2	1
FITNESS/ATHLETICS	5	4	3	2	1
GENERAL HEALTH	5	4	3	2	1

Please list any physical/medical problems or concerns (specify such as nervousness, headaches, soiling, allergies, etc.):

<u>SOCIAL COMPETENCE</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
SENSITIVITY AND CARING TOWARDS OTHERS	5	4	3	2	1
FRIENDSHIP WITH PEERS	5	4	3	2	1
RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS	5	4	3	2	1
SCHOOL AND CLASS PARTICIPATION	5	4	3	2	1
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
RESPECT AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHERS	5	4	3	2	1
ADAPTABILITY	5	4	3	2	1
ANGER MANAGEMENT/ CONFLICT RESOLUTION	5	4	3	2	1

Describe the child's attitude toward control and discipline:

Describe the child's interaction with peers and teachers:

Does the child exhibit any of the following (check all that apply):

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR _____
NON-DELINQUENT BUT RESENTFUL
OF CONTROLS AND AUTHORITY _____
DAY DREAMING, WITHDRAWAL _____

COGNITIVE COMPETENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
ACADEMIC POTENTIAL	5	4	3	2	1
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
CREATIVITY	5	4	3	2	1
REASONING AND PROBLEM SOLVING	5	4	3	2	1
SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT	5	4	3	2	1

On what are these conclusions based?

Please list areas of academic:

STRENGTHS _____

NEEDS _____

Has the child ever received Basic Skills Instruction? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, in what subjects? _____

How has the child's overall academic performance changed this year?

Improved _____ Remained the same _____ Declined _____

Has child ever been retained? _____ If yes, in what grade and year _____

ATTENDANCE

Approximate number of days school has been in session _____

Days absent _____ Days tardy _____

<u>PERSONAL COMPETENCE</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
SELF-DISCIPLINE	5	4	3	2	1
ASSERTIVENESS	5	4	3	2	1
SELF MOTIVATION	5	4	3	2	1
SENSE OF HUMOR	5	4	3	2	1
ENJOYMENT OF LIFE	5	4	3	2	1
SELF-CONFIDENCE	5	4	3	2	1
DAILY LIVING SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM	5	4	3	2	1

<u>CHARACTER</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
TRUSTWORTHINESS	5	4	3	2	1
CULTURAL AWARENESS/ ACCEPTANCE	5	4	3	2	1
CITIZENSHIP	5	4	3	2	1
RESPONSIBILITY	5	4	3	2	1
FAIRNESS	5	4	3	2	1

<u>FAMILY SYSTEM</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
PARENT INTEREST IN SCHOOL	5	4	3	2	1
SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL	5	4	3	2	1
SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS	5	4	3	2	1
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP	5	4	3	2	1

To your knowledge, has the family experienced any of the following (check all that apply and add explanation as needed):

SUBSTANCE ABUSE	_____	PHYSICAL/SEXUAL ABUSE	_____
DELINQUENCY	_____	INCARCERATION	_____
OTHER	_____		

Explanation _____

SPECIFIC GOALS/OBJECTIVES

In what specific ways do you think a Big Brother/Big Sister can help this child?

Additional comments

NOTE: Please attach the child's most recent report card.

Signature/Title of Person Completing Report

School Name

APPENDIX B

BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS OF SALEM COUNTY

PROGRESS EVALUATION FORM

Date

(Child's Name)

(Grade)

(Length of Association)

Please evaluate this child in the following competency areas.

<u>PHYSICAL COMPETENCE</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
GROSS MOTOR SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
FINE MOTOR SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
PERSONAL HYGIENE	5	4	3	2	1
FITNESS/ATHLETICS	5	4	3	2	1
GENERAL HEALTH	5	4	3	2	1

<u>SOCIAL COMPETENCE</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
SENSITIVITY AND CARING TOWARDS OTHERS	5	4	3	2	1
FRIENDSHIP WITH PEERS	5	4	3	2	1
RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS	5	4	3	2	1
SCHOOL AND CLASS PARTICIPATION	5	4	3	2	1
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
RESPECT AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHERS	5	4	3	2	1
ADAPTABILITY	5	4	3	2	1
ANGER MANAGEMENT/ CONFLICT RESOLUTION	5	4	3	2	1

During the past year, has the child's attitude toward control and discipline:

IMPROVED _____ DECLINED _____ STAYED THE SAME _____

During the past year, has the child's interaction with peers and teachers:

IMPROVED _____ DECLINED _____ STAYED THE SAME _____

Does the child exhibit any of the following (check all that apply):

- ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR _____
- NON-DELINQUENT BUT RESENTFUL
OF CONTROLS AND AUTHORITY _____
- DAY DREAMING, WITHDRAWAL _____

COGNITIVE COMPETENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
ACADEMIC POTENTIAL	5	4	3	2	1
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	5	4	3	2	1
CREATIVITY	5	4	3	2	1
REASONING AND PROBLEM SOLVING	5	4	3	2	1
SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT	5	4	3	2	1

How has the child's overall academic performance changed this year?

IMPROVED _____ DECLINED _____ STAYED THE SAME _____

Will the child be retained? _____

ATTENDANCE

Days absent _____ Days tardy _____

<u>PERSONAL COMPETENCE</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
SELF-DISCIPLINE	5	4	3	2	1
ASSERTIVENESS	5	4	3	2	1
SELF MOTIVATION	5	4	3	2	1
SENSE OF HUMOR	5	4	3	2	1
ENJOYMENT OF LIFE	5	4	3	2	1
SELF-CONFIDENCE	5	4	3	2	1
DAILY LIVING SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM	5	4	3	2	1

<u>CHARACTER</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
TRUSTWORTHINESS	5	4	3	2	1
CULTURAL AWARENESS/ ACCEPTANCE	5	4	3	2	1
CITIZENSHIP	5	4	3	2	1
RESPONSIBILITY	5	4	3	2	1
FAIRNESS	5	4	3	2	1

<u>FAMILY SYSTEM</u>	<u>SUPERIOR</u>	<u>ABOVE</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>BELOW</u>	<u>POOR</u>
PARENT INTEREST IN SCHOOL	5	4	3	2	1
SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL	5	4	3	2	1
SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS	5	4	3	2	1
PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP	5	4	3	2	1

SPECIFIC GOALS/OBJECTIVES

In what specific ways do you think a Big Brother/Big Sister has helped this child?

Would you recommend having this child continue in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program next year? With the same mentor?

What goals would you like to see emphasized for the continuation of this match?

Additional comments

Signature/Title of Person Completing Report

School Name