

“We’re one big family now”

Cohesion in Project Arrive Group Mentoring

Guillen, N., Faust, L., & Kuperminc, G.

Introduction

- **Group cohesion**, described as a sense of belongingness and/or shared goals with peers, has been shown to promote positive outcomes among adolescents (Mooji, Smeets, & De Wit, 2011)
- Group cohesion among adolescents is best achieved in settings in which they feel able and willing to freely express themselves (Bruner, Côté, Eys, & Wilson, 2014)

Present Study

- Using a **mixed methods** approach we conducted a program evaluation on Project arrive, a school-based group mentoring program for at-risk 9th graders in San Francisco.
- It was posited that the processes in Project Arrive contribute to a greater sense of group cohesion among both mentors and mentees.

Participants

Focus Groups:

- 5 Groups
- Both Mentors and Mentees

Mentor Survey

- N= 34
- Average of 6-10 years experience in Youth Development

Student Survey

- N = 114
- 63.5% male
- 51 % Latino/ Hispanic
- 25% Mixed Race/ Ethnicity

Examples of Quotes Demonstrating Group Cohesion through Participation in Project Arrive

Theme	Example
Mentee feelings of Cohesion	<p>“We’re one big family now”</p> <p>“...when I was in the group it gave me more choices to talk to new people.”</p>
sMentor feelings of Cohesion	<p>“...I really appreciate how connected they are to each other and how much they support each other...”</p> <p>“...I feel that they also form relationships with us and that they know they can come to us for support for anything else...”</p> <p>“...also having a sense of cohesiveness and connection with peers, which is very important to them. So I think they get into that sense of like. This is our group.”</p>

Measures

We gathered data on participants’ experience within the program. Below are some examples of questions we asked mentors and mentees during focus groups and surveys:

Focus Groups

- “How important is this group to you?”
- “What’s something that you appreciate or that you really like about your group?”

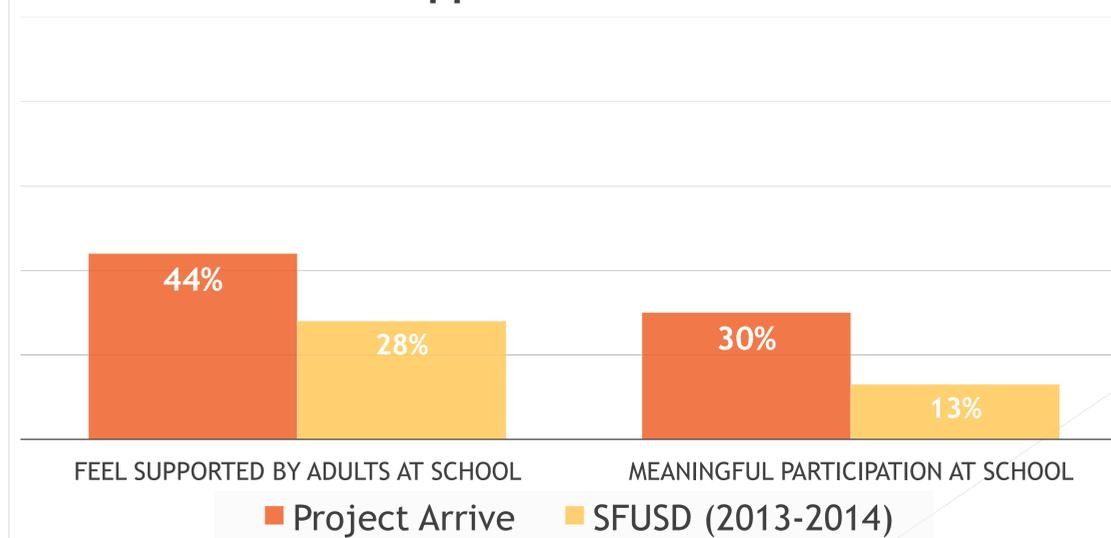
Mentor Survey

- “Would you consider yourself someone that your mentees would turn to if they needed help?”
- “Please rate the overall sense of cohesion that characterized your group at this point in the year.”

Student Survey

- “Do you feel as if your mentor cares about you?”
- “Do you feel like you are a part of your group?”
- “Would you say that the members of your group care about each other?”

Percent of Students who Reported High Levels of Support and Motivation



Conclusion

- 86% of mentors reported their groups being “cohesive” or “very cohesive”
- Mentors reported the group environment of security as a strong contributing factor to the sense of cohesiveness.
- Mentees participating in Project Arrive reported feelings of support from an adult while in school and in their group.
- Project Arrive creates an environment of security and safety which contributes to stronger and more genuine relationships between mentors and mentees.