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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentee feelings of Cohesion</td>
<td>“We’re one big family now”</td>
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<td>“…when I was in the group it gave me more choices to talk to new people.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentor feelings of Cohesion</td>
<td>“…I really appreciate how connected they are to each other and how much they support each other…”</td>
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<td>“…I feel that they also form relationships with us and that they know they can come to us for support for anything else…”</td>
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<td>“…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.”</td>
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Percent of Students who Reported High Levels of Support and Motivation

- FEEL SUPPORTED BY ADULTS AT SCHOOL
  - Project Arrive: 44%
  - SFUSD (2013-2014): 28%

- MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL
  - Project Arrive: 30%
  - SFUSD (2013-2014): 13%

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.