

# POSITIVE SUPPORT:

MENTORING AND DEPRESSION  
AMONG HIGH-RISK YOUTH



SHAWN BAULDRY

OJJDP

P/PV

A PUBLICATION OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE VENTURES

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Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

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# INTRODUCTION

*I*n 2002, law enforcement agencies in the United States arrested an estimated 2.3 million youth (Snyder 2004). Close to a third of these arrests involved youth under the age of 15. Although juvenile crime has declined since the mid-1990s, the high number of youth arrested each year remains a significant problem for many communities. Low-income, urban neighborhoods experience disproportionately high rates of juvenile delinquency (Sampson 1995). Furthermore, the young people who live in these communities have an increased risk of becoming victims of a violent crime when compared with youth in less disadvantaged communities (Lauritsen 2003).

In addition to the impact on neighborhoods, juvenile delinquency can have long-term effects on the lives of the young people committing criminal acts—and on their families. These youth will tend to experience problems in school, in the workforce and in their interpersonal relationships. Delinquent youth have lower educational aspirations and are more likely to drop out of school than nondelinquent youth (Tanner et al. 1999). Once they enter the labor market, formerly delinquent youth tend to get less prestigious jobs and are more likely to be laid off (Hagan 1993, 1997; Nagin and Waldfogel 1995). If they get married, they are more likely to get divorced (Sampson and Laub 1990, 1993).

In order to reduce the impact that delinquency has on communities, families and youth, effective interventions are necessary. Many theories of juvenile delinquency emphasize the role that relationships play in a young person's life,

both positive and negative (see, for example, Hirschi 1969; Sutherland and Cressey 1978; Hawkins and Weis 1985). Young people who interact regularly with friends who are engaged in delinquent acts are more prone to delinquency themselves. In contrast, young people surrounded by caring adults are less prone to delinquency thanks to the support they receive and the monitoring provided by the adults.

Building on our earlier work, which provided evidence that mentoring programs prevent the initiation of delinquent behaviors (Tierney and Grossman 1995), Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) hypothesized that mentoring high-risk young people might help reduce such behaviors among those already engaged in them. Although preventing young people from engaging in risky behaviors is the ideal, intervening when young people are already in trouble will be necessary as long as delinquency exists. Such interventions are challenging: Adjudicated youth have high rates of recidivism (McMackin et al. 2004), and although there is evidence that some programs, such as multi-systemic therapy, are effective in some settings, no single program is effective with all young people.

At the time that the National Faith-Based Initiative for High-Risk Youth (NFBI) began in 1998, little evidence existed about the effectiveness of mentoring programs for high-risk young people. Two out of three significant studies evaluating the effect of mentoring on recidivism found mixed results, while a third found mentoring to be harmful (McCord 1992; O'Donnell et al. 1979; Davidson et al. 1987).<sup>1</sup> None of these studies, however, included mentoring programs operated by faith-based organizations. A recent review that assesses evaluations completed since the NFBI began comes to the same conclusion: some programs have achieved modest positive results while others appear to have some harmful effects (Blechman and Bopp 2005).

Therefore, the question remains: can mentoring deter high-risk youth from risky behaviors?

## THE NATIONAL FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE

In the late 1990s, influenced by the work of the Boston Ten Point Coalition, P/PV designed the NFBI demonstration around small to mid-sized congregations generally located in the urban communities where many high-risk youth live. Three elements formed the core of the NFBI program:

1. A focus on high-risk youth: P/PV required sites to target youth already involved in delinquent activities, or considered by community members to be headed for trouble.
2. Partnerships: With the successful community and justice partnerships of the Boston Ten Point Coalition in mind, P/PV required sites to collaborate with other faith-based organizations, juvenile justice agencies and social service providers.
3. Key services: In addition to whatever services the sites offered when they entered the demonstration, P/PV required them to develop new services to meet the young people's needs around skill development (education and employment related) and positive adult relationships (mentoring) if they did not already have such services.

With these three core elements in place, the National Faith-Based Initiative began operations in late 1998. Over the course of the demonstration, sites operated in Baton Rouge, LA; the Bronx, NY; Brooklyn, NY; Cleveland, OH; Denver, CO; Detroit, MI; Fresno, CA; Indianapolis, IN; Los Angeles, CA; Oakland, CA; Philadelphia, PA; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; Tulsa, OK; and Washington, DC.<sup>2</sup> The demonstration concluded in late 2004, having served 1,786 youth.

In two previous reports we evaluated sites' progress in each of the core elements: 1) How well did the sites recruit high-risk youth?; 2) How well did they form collaborations?; and 3) How well did they implement their services? (Branch 2002, Hartmann 2003) We found that the sites generally succeeded in recruiting high-risk youth. They also leveraged their credibility as community leaders to establish partnerships with an array of juvenile justice agencies, social service providers and other faith-based organizations. However, many sites encountered serious challenges in implementing key services. Inexperience in offering structured programming, inadequate staff resources and competing demands on those resources were the primary reasons for the inconsistent and often weak implementation. Because of this, we did not recommend to funders

and policymakers that they should move forward with a more rigorous random assignment evaluation. We concluded that future work with small to medium-sized faith-based organizations should be guided not simply by broad principles but rather by concrete implementation requirements buttressed with substantial training and technical assistance.

We continued, however, to look at the NFBI's mentoring component. Our third report on the initiative focused on mentoring programs (Bauldry and Hartmann 2004). In that report we documented the creative ways in which the NFBI sites adapted the best practices from community-based mentoring programs to address the unique challenges of working with high-risk youth and faith-based mentors. We found that the sites struggled with mentor recruitment and estimated that they managed to recruit only a third of the volunteers needed to provide a mentor for each young person in their programs at the time. These faith-based mentors tended to be well-educated and resided outside the local community, offering their mentees links to opportunities that may have been unavailable within their own neighborhoods.

We also felt it would be valuable to document participating youth's outcomes in order to determine the more or less successful components of the NFBI, and provide information to the field that might help funders and program operators make better choices about what and how to implement. Too often evaluators show that programs are not effective without trying to discern why they were not effective, or what might have been done to strengthen them. Accordingly, in Fall 2003 we selected three NFBI sites that had made the most progress implementing their programs, and the following year we added two more sites, for a total of five that would participate in our outcomes study. These sites—Baton Rouge, Brooklyn, Denver, Philadelphia and Seattle—each had demonstrated an ability to recruit youth and provide services in at least one of the three core program areas. Each had a stable organizational and programmatic structure and did not experience significant staff turnover during this period of study.

There are two limitations of the study design to keep in mind when assessing our findings. First, since we did not conduct a random assignment or comparison group study, we cannot attribute the changes the youth experienced to their participation in the programs. Nevertheless, as one would hope with a demonstration, our findings suggest some areas that are promising and deserve further attention and work.

Second, due to the timing of the demonstration and the enrollment processes at the sites, we had an average of about six months between baseline and follow-up.

*Table 1*  
**NFBI Sites and Lead Agencies Participating in the Outcomes Study**

Site Location	Name of Program	Name of Lead Agency
Baton Rouge, LA	Baton Rouge Walk of Faith Collaboration	Beech Grove Baptist Church
Brooklyn, NY	Youth and Congregations in Partnership	Kings County District Attorney's Office
Denver, CO	Positive Connections	Grace and Truth Full Gospel Pentecostal Church
Philadelphia, PA	Southwest Youth and Family Network of Philadelphia	African American Interdenominational Ministries
Seattle, WA	JOY! Initiative	Church Council of Greater Seattle

In general, one would prefer a longer follow-up (12 or more months) in order to allow time for the programs to have an effect, but, as will become clear when we discuss the study's results, the six-month period was sufficient to detect some promising early changes experienced by the youth.

We designed the study to detect outcomes in the following areas: adult support, depression, pro-social behavior, school-related attitudes and behaviors (including educational aspirations, time spent on homework, self-reported grades, skipping school, and a variety of classroom behaviors), substance use and self-reported recidivism.<sup>3</sup>

Our analysis of the outcomes found that, in general, the young people did not make significant progress in these areas. The lack of progress could have resulted because the program was not founded on sound principles, because it was poorly implemented or some combination thereof. Given the documented implementation problems, even at the five sites selected for further study, we felt confident that the idea had not been well implemented. Thus the demonstration as a whole was not a fair test of that idea.

We decided to probe deeper, using the fact that the five sites varied widely in their implementation of the program but that each did implement at least one component reasonably well. Thus, although almost 80 percent of the youth reported receiving some services through the NFBI, only between a third and two thirds of the participants reported receiving each specific service.<sup>4</sup> This pattern allowed us to see if the young people who had received a given service did better than those who had not.<sup>5</sup>

We found no differences in outcomes when we looked at education and employment services. However, our analysis of the youth matched with mentors for at least six months produced interesting results. Mentoring among the NFBI youth acted as a barrier against depression, which in turn had an effect on how the youth handled social conflicts, substance use and recidivism.

In the following chapters, we describe the mentoring programs at the NFBI sites (Chapter 2), discuss the relationships between mentoring and youth outcomes (Chapter 3), and consider the challenges of implementing a mentoring program for high-risk youth (Chapter 4).







# NFBI YOUTH AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

Unlike many youth programs, the NFBI sites focused on serving very high-risk youth. Most of the youth enrolled in the NFBI faced significant challenges, including—for a majority—criminal records. Young people with this type of background have proven difficult to work with in social programs of any kind. In this chapter, we describe the youth who were enrolled in the NFBI sites during the outcomes study, and the structure of the mentoring programs created to serve them.

## WHO ENROLLED IN THE NFBI?

### Youth Characteristics and Adolescent Development

Although P/PV required the NFBI sites to work with high-risk youth, the sites had latitude in choosing who they targeted. Some sites opted to work with young adolescents while others worked with older youth. The ages of the young people enrolled during the outcomes study ranged from 8 to 22, with 86 percent falling between the ages of 12 and 19 (see Table 2 on the next page). From a developmental perspective this represents a wide range. Early adolescents (10 to 14 year-olds) tend to experience rapid mood swings associated with the onset of puberty (Larson et al. 2002). During this period, young people often argue more and have more conflicts with their parents (Berger 2003). The challenges youth face evolve

*Table 2*  
**Youth Characteristics**

	Percentage
Age:	
8 to 11	10%
12 to 15	53%
16 to 19	33%
20 to 22	4%
Male	46%
Female	54%
African American	79%
Other Race/Ethnicity	21%

Source: Baseline questionnaires (n=160).

as they enter their later teens. In the NFBI, older youth tended to be involved in more serious delinquent activities and to be further behind in school.

The NFBI sites enrolled a roughly equal number of boys and girls overall (see Table 2), although one site focused almost exclusively on boys, and another almost exclusively on girls. As with the range in ages, boys and girls face different challenges and have different needs. The most significant gender differences identified by the staffs from the NFBI sites centered around sexuality, with body image and pregnancy a particular concern for the girls.

### Challenges the Youth Faced

As expected, a majority of the young people who enrolled in the NFBI programs during the outcomes study had a record of at least one arrest (see Table 3). The crimes they committed ranged from serious crimes against persons, such as robbery or assault (38 percent of those arrested), to juvenile status offenses such as truancy (32 percent of those arrested). In some cases, young people had been arrested for offenses that might not have resulted in an arrest for youth living in more stable environments. For instance, one mentor we spoke with told us his mentee had been arrested because “[h]e had a fight with a group.” In another case, one of the participants indicated she had been arrested because “[m]y older sister and I were fighting, and my grandfather got tired of the fact that we didn’t get along.” Even though some of the young people’s offenses do not seem so

*Table 3*  
Home Environments and Arrests

	Percentage
Single-Mother Household	59%
Public Housing	32%
Number of Arrests:	
Never arrested	38%
One arrest	42%
Two or more arrests	20%

Source: Baseline questionnaires (n=160; single mother household missing 1, public housing missing 3, arrests missing 1).

unusual, the consequence—involvement in the juvenile justice system—marked a dramatic turn in their lives.

In addition to their criminal involvement, many of the NFBI youth lived in difficult home environments. Almost a third of the young people resided in public housing projects (see Table 3). Such neighborhoods often lack the capacity or “collective efficacy” to limit delinquency and youth violence (Sampson et al. 1997). A majority of the young people lived in single-mother households. Recent research has found that children living with a single parent are three times more likely than children living with both parents to be a victim of a violent crime (Lauritsen 2003).

Beyond what these numbers suggest, our conversations with the young people enrolled in the NFBI uncovered some particularly stressful home situations. In some cases, the youth we spoke with described deaths in their families; one participant told us, “I live with my grandfather. My mother passed away a few years ago.” In other cases, family members were absent or in prison. One young person reported: “Now my mom is back in jail. And my dad is not in my life.” Even participants living in two-adult households did not necessarily have good home environments. One mentor we spoke with described his mentee’s living situation this way:

*He lives with his mother and grandfather...no father figure in the house. I had the opportunity to meet the mother once, and I could see from that one visit that she was not a good influence. She might have had a drug problem.*

## THE NFBI MENTORING PROGRAMS

P/PV considered mentoring to be one of the core services the NFBI sites could offer. Not all of the sites in the demonstration successfully developed a mentoring program, but each of the five sites participating in the outcomes research did. The five sites, however, did not all adopt the same model for their mentoring programs. Instead, each chose a design that most closely aligned with its other programs and its respective philosophy of how best to work with high-risk youth.

### One-to-One Mentoring

Three of the sites (Baton Rouge, Philadelphia and Seattle) opted to provide youth with one-to-one mentoring, like the community-based mentoring model shown to be effective in P/PV's 1995 study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters (Tierney and Grossman 1995). Staff at these sites believed that individual mentoring relationships best complemented their other services. As in community-based mentoring programs, the sites expected mentors, once matched, to spend time talking with mentees on the phone and in face-to-face meetings. The sites provided mentor/mentee events, such as picnics or bowling nights, and suggestions for activities, but generally allowed the mentors to work out how they spent their time with their mentees.

### Group Mentoring

One site, Denver, decided to use a group mentoring model in which one mentor was matched with five to eight young people. They chose this model primarily because it fit most closely with their existing program, which emphasized providing services in a group environment. For their general program, all of the young people came together twice a week for an hour and a half after school to engage in various activities centered around anger management and computer-assisted education. The group mentoring component, which occurred outside of the general program period, involved field trips, meals and other recreational activities where the youth split into small groups along with their mentors.

### Team Mentoring

Brooklyn developed a unique adaptation of the community-based mentoring model that involved providing each young person with three to five mentors rather than just a single one. Brooklyn recruited these "teams" of mentors from their partner congregations, with an emphasis on one congregation for one

youth. The reasoning was that a team of mentors would be better able to meet the additional needs of working with a high-risk youth and would provide insurance against mentor burnout.

Occasionally the young people would meet with several of their mentors for an activity, but more often they met with one of their mentors at a time. In some cases, the team of mentors rotated meetings, which allowed for more frequent contact with their mentees and for different mentors to focus on different aspects of the relationship. For instance, one of the mentors might help with homework, another might play handball or chess, and another might just hang out and talk with the young person. In other cases, the youth formed a particularly strong bond with one of the mentors, while the others adopted more of a supporting role.

### Shared Components of the Mentoring Programs<sup>6</sup>

Despite the different models used across the NFBI sites, some aspects of their mentoring programs were essentially the same. As much as they were able, all sites made matches on the basis of gender and common interests. In addition, whenever possible, the sites took into account the particular skills and experiences the mentors would bring to their relationships. For instance, in one program a young person was struggling with math at school, so a staff member decided to make the match with a retired math teacher who could help with homework. In another case, a young man was interested in working out, so the site matched him with a mentor who had a membership to a gym.

In addition to similar matching processes, the sites all expected the same time commitment from their mentors. The NFBI sites asked mentors to commit to stay with a participant for a minimum of one year, and to meet with the participant for a minimum of one to two hours per week or four hours per month.

Finally, all of the sites provided regular support to their mentors. The four sites that adopted an individual or team mentoring model held regular mentor support groups (either once a month or once every other month) in which mentors were invited to discuss any challenges they were having. (In Denver, because the group mentoring was so tightly integrated into other programming and the mentors were in regular contact with staff, it was determined that mentors did not need special meetings.) In addition to meetings among mentors, each of the sites maintained regular, one-on-one contact with mentors to handle any problems that had arisen and to provide general support (typically once a month, although sometimes more often in the early stages of relationships).

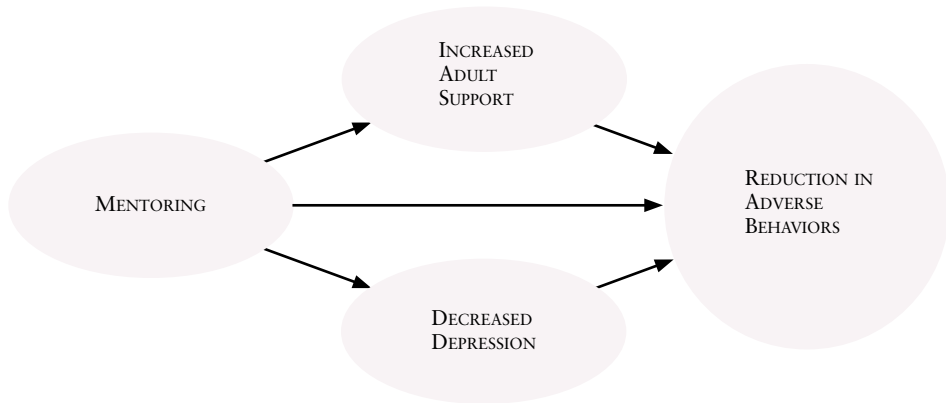


# MENTORING AND YOUTH OUTCOMES

A rich body of research about at-risk youth, as opposed to high-risk youth, has established a broad array of benefits from mentoring (see Rhodes 2002 for a general overview). Successful mentoring matches can help young people develop better relationships with their families and other adults (Rhodes et al. 2005, Tierney and Grossman 1995). Mentoring has also been linked with psychological benefits, though the findings have been less definitive. Some research has established that young people matched with mentors experienced a reduction in feelings of hopelessness (Keating et al. 2002); however, other research found that mentoring had less of an effect on depression than various individual and environmental factors (DuBois and Silverthorn 2005). Finally, mentoring has been shown to have a positive effect on some forms of delinquent behavior, including skipping school and skipping class, initiating alcohol and drug use, and getting in physical fights (Grossman and Rhodes 2002; Tierney and Grossman 1995).

Most of this research measures the effects of mentoring on at-risk youth rather than high-risk youth, like those enrolled in the NFBI programs. Much of the sparse research on mentoring high-risk youth focuses on recidivism and has found few programs able to make a significant difference (Blechman and Bopp 2005). We drew on these past findings about mentoring at-risk youth and recidivism among high-risk youth in our analysis of outcomes in the NFBI. In particular, we postulated that mentoring would increase adult support, might affect depression and, if so, would lower adverse outcomes such as fighting, substance use and recidivism for NFBI participants (see Figure 1 on the next page).

*Figure 1*  
Hypothesized Effects of Mentoring



With this model in mind, we analyzed how mentoring is associated with adult support and depression among the NFBI youth, and then considered the remaining outcomes. In each analysis, we also looked at the potential role of the age and gender of the young person, whether the youth lived in a single-mother household or public housing, the number of prior arrests, how long the site provided services and how frequently the young person attended (see Appendix C for all models).

## WHERE THE NFBI YOUTH STOOD AT ENROLLMENT

In order to understand how the young people in the NFBI programs changed, we had to consider how they looked at enrollment. On average, when the youth entered the programs they had three adult members of their family and two other adults in their lives providing support (see Table 4). Support from three family members is fairly typical, but two other adults is low. In our research on after-school programs, we have found middle-school youth have an average of three other supportive adults (Walker and Arbretton 2004). More strikingly, more than 30 percent of the NFBI youth showed signs of depression when they enrolled (Table 4). Research has found that as many as one in five teenagers experience periods of clinical depression by the time they graduate from high school (Lewinsohn et al. 1993). Although we do not have a formal



**Table 4**  
**Adult Support and Depression at Baseline**

	Average / Percentage
Family Support	2.9 adults
Other Adult Support	2.2 adults
Showed Signs of Depression <sup>a</sup>	32%

Source: Baseline questionnaires (n=160; family support missing 5, other adult support missing 7, depression missing 2).

<sup>a</sup> Based on the Center for Epidemiological Studies scale (see Appendix A for details).

measure of clinical depression, the fact that almost one in three of the NFBI youth showed signs of depression at a single point in time suggests that the extent of depression among these young people is higher than among the general population.

Many of the young people ended up in the NFBI programs after losing their temper and committing a violent act. Given this, it is not surprising that between 25 and 40 percent indicated that they handled conflict and anger in a negative fashion (see Table 5). On the other hand, the NFBI youth did not report high levels of substance use when they enrolled. Only 32 percent and 23 percent acknowledged drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana, respectively; however self-reports may downplay the actual extent of substance use among NFBI participants.

**Table 5**  
**Social Conflicts and Substance Use at Baseline**

	Percentage
Handle Social Conflicts by:	
Threatening the person	25%
Yelling at the person	40%
Physically fighting the person	37%
Substance Use <sup>a</sup>	
At least one drink	32%
Smoke marijuana	23%

Source: Baseline questionnaires (n=160; missing between 4 and 8 across the items).

<sup>a</sup> Percentage of youth responding “not much” “sometimes” or “a lot” to: “How often do you do the following?  
 Have at least one drink; Smoke marijuana.”

## MENTORING AS A BARRIER AGAINST DEPRESSION

Our results suggest that mentoring may provide some protection against depression among high-risk youth, but that it is less likely to serve as a remedy when youth are already depressed. Holding constant whether the young people showed signs of depression when they enrolled, as well as other youth characteristics, those who were mentored at least 6 months were 69 percent less likely to show signs of depression at follow-up than those who were not mentored (see Appendix C for the model). In order to understand this relationship better, we separated the NFBI youth into two groups: those who came into the program showing signs of depression and those who did not. When we considered the role of mentoring for each group separately (see Table 6), we found that among the youth who did not show signs of depression when they enrolled, only 9 percent who were mentored showed signs of depression at follow-up, as compared with 31 percent who were not mentored. Although we see a similar pattern among the young people who did show signs of depression when they enrolled, the smaller number of those who were mentored in this group (12 youth) is insufficient to establish a clear pattern.

We did not find a relationship between mentoring and improvements in either family support or other adult support, which was surprising given how well-established this relationship is among at-risk youth. The absence of such a relationship may be due to two factors. With family support, neither youth with mentors nor youth without mentors improved between baseline and follow-up. It may be that the six-month period between questionnaires did not allow enough time for mentoring to have an effect on family support. By contrast, all of the NFBI youth improved their level of other adult support. As we have indicated in a past report, the staff at the NFBI sites often formed close relationships with the young people in their programs (Branch 2002). We speculate that the relationships with staff were sufficiently strong to permit young people to perceive that they had more supportive relationships in their lives, but not sufficient to generate the range of positive effects of good mentoring relationships.

**Table 6**  
**Relationship Between Mentoring and Depression**

	Not Mentored	Mentored	Total
<b>Youth Who Did Not Show Signs of Depression at Enrollment (n=106)</b>			
Remained not depressed at follow-up	69%	91%	76%
Showed signs of depression at follow-up	31%	9%	24%
<b>Youth Who Did Show Signs of Depression at Enrollment (n=50)</b>			
Did not show signs of depression at follow-up	47%	67%	52%
Continued to show signs of depression at follow-up	53%	33%	48%

### Mentoring, Depression and Handling Social Conflicts

In our analysis of the three negative responses to social conflicts (threatening, yelling and fighting), mentoring had a direct positive effect only on fighting. However, mentoring appears to have an indirect effect, in as much as it is a barrier to depression, on all three negative behaviors. The young people who did not show signs of depression at follow-up were less likely to threaten, yell or fight as a response to a social conflict.

### Mentoring, Depression and Substance Use

Although only 40 percent of the NFBI youth used alcohol or drugs when they enrolled, both mentoring and depression related to reductions in substance use. The young people who had been mentored for at least 6 months were 75 percent less likely to report using marijuana at follow-up, controlling for whether they reported using it at enrollment. The youth who did not show signs of depression at follow-up were 43 percent less likely to report drinking and 46 percent less likely to report using marijuana, in both cases controlling for baseline use.

### Depression and Recidivism among the NFBI Youth

To assess recidivism, the follow-up survey asked youth whether or not they had been arrested since entering the program. Twenty-eight percent reported being arrested, and there was no difference in the likelihood of being arrested between the young people who were mentored and those who were not. However, individuals who did not show signs of depression at follow-up were 58 percent less

likely to report being arrested. Once again, in as much as mentoring acts as a barrier to depression, it may arguably have an indirect effect on recidivism.

## CONCLUSION

Our analysis indicates that mentoring may hold promise as an intervention for high-risk youth. In particular, we see evidence that mentoring acted as a barrier against depression for the young people in the NFBI, which in turn is associated with a number of positive outcomes. Given the relatively high incidence of depression among high-risk youth in general, we should continue to explore the potential of mentoring as an effective intervention. In our next chapter, we examine the challenges sites faced in implementing mentoring programs for high-risk youth.





# THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING A MENTORING PROGRAM FOR HIGH-RISK YOUTH

Although the findings around outcomes and mentoring in the NFBI have promise, it is a sobering fact that only about 30 percent of the young people formed a relationship with a mentor that lasted at least six months. In this chapter we examine the challenges NFBI sites encountered in forging successful relationships between high-risk youth and mentors, and suggest possibilities for addressing those challenges.

## MENTOR RECRUITMENT

The primary reason the NFBI sites did not provide mentors for all of the young people who enrolled was that they simply lacked a sufficient number of volunteers, especially African American men. Mentor recruitment is an often-noted challenge with community-based mentoring programs, so it is not surprising that trying to recruit volunteers to work with more difficult youth proved even more challenging. In a past report, we estimated the sites managed to recruit an average of roughly one percent of the members of partner congregations to become mentors (Bauldry and Hartmann 2004). Furthermore, the demographic profile of the largely urban African American congregations that served as a base for recruitment favored enlisting women a bit older than the typical community-based mentor. In some cases it proved difficult for older mentors to overcome the age difference in forming relationships with their mentees. In addition, as the NFBI sites avoided cross-gender matches, there was a mismatch in gender between the pool of mentors and the pool of young people.

In other, more recent demonstrations—in particular, the Amachi mentoring program, which provides mentors to children with incarcerated parents; and the Juvenile Ready4Work initiative, a joint effort between P/PV and the US Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which provides reentry services to young people returning from institutional placement— P/PV has identified practices that strengthen mentor recruitment and draw more men into the process.

These practices are:

- Working primarily through pastors of local congregations. In our experience, volunteers for mentoring high-risk populations are most likely found in faith organizations. Pastors who are convinced that the main tenets of their faith provide a reason they and their congregations should become involved will then become powerful recruiters, using the pulpit and their authority to elicit volunteers from the congregation. Thus it is useful to have someone familiar with the tenets and language of faith organizations introduce the program, as they are more likely to be successful at gaining pastor support.
- Providing a modest stipend to a person at each congregation, selected by the pastor, to act as coordinator of recruitment and program activities. There is always administrative, logistical and human relations work involved in recruiting and retaining volunteers. When a program partners with another institution (in this case, mostly African American churches), it must provide some financial support to carry out that work. Having a mentor coordinator who receives a small stipend can facilitate recruitment, as can a strong appeal to the congregation’s pastor and a commitment from that pastor to recruit mentors from the pulpit.

## THE MATCHING PROCESS

Once the mentors were recruited for the NFBI, they had to go through a background check and an extended training that, in addition to the standard mentor training, addressed working with high-risk youth and provided guidelines for how faith should and should not be expressed in the mentoring relationship.<sup>7</sup> By the time they completed this process, which typically took a couple months, the mentors were eager to be matched. The NFBI sites, however, were not always ready to make a match. In some cases, the sites had recruited the mentors in anticipation of having a cohort of youth enrolled when the



mentors completed training, but the youth enrollment process lagged, delaying actually making a match. If the delay lasted longer than a month or two, many mentors lost interest and drifted away from the program. In other cases, the sites had a surplus of female mentors and simply not enough female participants with whom to match them. Again, after a couple months of inactivity, some of these mentors drifted away.

In order to minimize the possibility of mentors losing interest while waiting to be matched, programs have two basic options:

- They can recruit mentors on an as-needed basis rather than in cohorts as the NFBI sites typically did. This strategy, however, is likely to result in a delay for young people entering the program. Because of the likelihood of a wait, programs will need to find a way to keep the young people engaged during this period, which may require offering extra services. In addition, this strategy requires a continual and inefficient expenditure of resources on recruitment, background checks and training.
- The other option is to find ways to engage mentors while they are waiting to be matched. Some of the NFBI sites attempted to do this by inviting the unmatched mentors to participate in the mentor support group meetings or volunteer in other capacities. For instance, one of the NFBI sites used some of their mentors waiting to be matched as tutors and assistants in other service learning projects.

In our experience, the second option is the strongest, as it leads to better prepared mentors, and strengthens the program's involvement with the volunteers.

## FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

Despite the efforts of the NFBI sites to make matches based on common interests and perceived compatibility, some mentors and mentees never managed to form a relationship. In talking with the young people and the mentors we noticed a number of reasons for this. In some cases, the mentor overestimated how much time he or she had available. As two young people told us:

*I don't know his name. We haven't really had a chance to get together.*

*We've been talking [by phone apparently] but I haven't got to know a lot about him like I wanted to ... We set up dates before, but he was busy and I was busy.*

In other cases, the young people appeared to deliberately make it difficult for the mentor. This sort of behavior has been noted in community-based mentoring programs as a test to see if the mentor is serious about the relationship (Morrow and Styles 1995), but may be especially pronounced among high-risk youth, given that many of them have had negative experiences with adult relationships. We heard a number of mentors mention various forms of resistance:

*[It is frustrating] when you gear up to meet the child and the child does not show up and nobody says anything.*

*He'll listen, but he won't do anything.*

*I asked her at age 15 if she has any goals ... and she says that she didn't care to share them with me.*

Mentoring programs can help address these challenges through careful screening and training of the mentors and by putting an intensive case management component in place. When meeting with potential volunteers and in the mentor training, programs should be especially clear about the time commitment involved and some of the difficulties that arise in working with high-risk youth (see Bauldry and Hartmann 2004 for an extended discussion of how the NFBI sites screened and trained mentors).

In addition, as we described in a past report, the NFBI sites with stronger case management produced longer lasting matches (Bauldry and Hartmann 2004). In talking with the NFBI sites' staff and the mentors, we learned that case managers often provided advice, encouragement and motivation that helped many of the mentors get through the early stages of the relationship. We also heard a few instances where a mentee asked his case manager to talk with a mentor about how they spent their time together in order for it to be more oriented toward the mentee's needs.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the introduction we posed the question, “can mentoring deter high-risk youth from risky behaviors?” Our analysis of mentoring in the National Faith-Based Initiative suggests, in contrast to other studies of high-risk youth, that when mentors do form a bond with young people in the program, the young people benefit in a variety of ways, especially related to depression. In practice, however, it is not easy for programs to find adults willing to volunteer to work with already delinquent youth, and it is not easy for those who do volunteer to establish a relationship with young people who may have been let down by the other adults in their lives.

As this final chapter delineates, our experience indicates that there are effective strategies to address these challenges. It is important to keep developing, improving and documenting these effective strategies for training and program-development purposes. Although mentoring is not the sole answer to working with high-risk youth, it seems that it may provide an essential component—dependable human involvement and caring—that has proven difficult to harness in the institutions and environments that characterize these youth’s lives.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Cambridge-Somerville Study, conducted from the late 1930s through the mid-1940s, is perhaps the best-known and most rigorous study used as evidence that mentoring high-risk youth can be harmful to the mentored youth (see McCord 2003 for an extended discussion). The evidence is clear that the intervention failed and almost certainly caused long-term harm to the boys who participated in the study. What is less clear, however, is the conclusion that the mentoring received by the boys was damaging. The social workers linked the boys with many different services, including sending some to summer camp. It turned out that those boys who attended summer camp fared the worst. It has since been fairly well-established that environments that bring deviant young people together tend to exacerbate, rather than attenuate, their risky behavior (Dishion et al. 1999).
- 2 See Branch (2002) for a detailed description of the sites.
- 3 See Appendix A for a more detailed description of our instruments and response rates.
- 4 With respect to mentoring, 10 percent of the youth did not report being mentored at follow-up while our MIS data indicated that they had been matched. In this report, these youth are treated as not being mentored (see Appendix B for a discussion), so our comparison is between those youth who received at least 6 months of mentoring and those who did not.
- 5 Our ability to do this depends on whether the sites selected those who received the given services. If they did, then whatever reason resulted in a young person receiving a service could also be related to whatever outcome they achieved. We checked for this possibility and found little evidence of it (see Appendix B for our analysis related to the mentoring program).
- 6 See Bauldry and Hartmann (2004) for an extended consideration of the designs of the NFBI mentoring programs, especially as they relate to working with high-risk youth and faith-based mentors.
- 7 See Bauldry and Hartmann (2004) for an extended discussion of the mentor training the NFBI sites developed.



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# APPENDIX A

## RESPONSE RATES AND SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

### RESPONSE RATES

During the baseline period of the study, the sites enrolled a total of 209 youth. They were able to obtain follow-up questionnaires from 160 of them, for a 77 percent response rate. This is a reasonably good response rate, especially for this population. In addition, we used the MIS data available for all youth to check whether the young people who completed a follow-up differed from those who did not, and the only significant difference was on one of our measures of handling social conflict (yelling).

### SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

In our analyses we made use of three scales, two of which related to adult support and one related to depression (see Table A.1 for reliability). The two adult support scales were based on instruments developed in P/PV's work on after-school programs (see, for example, Walker and Arbreton 2004). Respondents were asked to indicate the number (from zero to four) of adults either in their family or outside of their family who did the following:

- Pay attention to what's going on in your life;
- Get on your case if you screw up;
- Say something nice to you when you do something good;
- Would help you in an emergency;
- Would give you advice about personal problems; and
- Would listen to you if you are really upset or mad about something.

Our depression scale is based on a Center of Epidemiological Studies scale; respondents were asked to indicate how often during the last week (rarely or none of the time/less than one day, some of the time/one to two days, occasionally/three to four days, most or all of the time/five to seven days) they did the following (Radloff 1991):

- I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me;
- I did not feel like eating/my appetite was poor;
- I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with the help from my family and friends;
- I felt that I was not as good as other people;
- I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing;
- I felt depressed;
- I felt that everything I did was an effort;

- I felt hopeless about the future;
- I thought my life had been a failure;
- I felt fearful;
- My sleep was restless;
- I was unhappy;
- I talked less than normal;
- I felt lonely;
- People were unfriendly;
- I did not enjoy life;
- I had crying spells;
- I felt sad;
- I felt that people disliked me; and
- I could not get “going.”

A score of 0.8 on this scale indicates that an individual shows signs of depression and should be referred to a counselor. We adopted this as the cutoff point in our analyses.

*Table A.1*  
Reliability of Scales at Baseline and Follow-up

	Baseline	Follow-up
Family Adult Support	0.88	0.92
Other Adult Support	0.93	0.94
Depression	0.91	0.92

Notes: Reliability based on Cronbach's alpha.

## APPENDIX B

### WHO RECEIVED MENTORS?

As anticipated in our past research, during the period of outcomes study the NFBI sites were unable to recruit enough mentors to match with all of the young people who enrolled in their programs. Due to these challenges, only 29 percent of the respondents reported meeting with a mentor at least once a month at follow-up. In our analyses, we compared how the young people with and without mentors fared over the course of six months in the NFBI programs.

In order to understand the differences between the young people with and without mentors, we needed to establish how the sites determined who they matched. From our interviews, we knew that the sites avoided cross-gender matches and took into account mutual interests as much as possible. Beyond that, the sites adopted a first-come first-serve approach to making matches. The sites may, however, have unintentionally selected young people to match with a mentor based on some other criteria. If so, and if those criteria related to any of the outcomes we investigated, then we would not be able to determine how much of the observed change related to mentoring and how much related to the selection criteria. Although we cannot eliminate the possibility that some unobserved characteristic of the young people was the basis of selection, we feel confident in our analysis because none of the youth characteristics we gathered predicted who received a mentor.

In addition, according to monthly monitoring information collected on each match, 16 matches (10 percent) dissolved before the six-month follow-up. The presence of the small group of young people in our comparison group, however, may inflate the effects of mentoring a bit as the dissolution of their matches suggests that they may be more difficult to work with. In order to check for this possibility we ran separate analyses with these young people excluded. The estimated effects of mentoring on depression, and both mentoring and depression on the outcomes, remained essentially the same. The significance of the effect of mentoring on depression and the effect of depression on marijuana use, however, dropped to a 0.1 level. Furthermore, in these models we no longer detected the secondary effect of depression on alcohol use. Given our already small sample size and the fact that our estimates of the effects remained the same, we opted to include these 16 youth in the reported analyses. As such, the results are best understood as the effect of receiving at least 6 months of mentoring.

## APPENDIX C

### REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF MENTORING AND OUTCOMES

In order to analyze the relationships between mentoring and the various outcomes, we regressed each follow-up outcome on the baseline level of the outcome, mentoring and a set of control variables capturing youth characteristics and program experiences (age, female, single mother household, public housing, the number of arrests, how long the youth was in the program and how frequently the youth attended the program). To account for the fact that youth were nested in programs, we used cluster robust standard errors in assessing statistical significance (Williams 2000). The models for our outcomes took the following form for intermediate outcomes:

$$y_{ij} = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 \text{mentored}_{ij} + \beta \mathbf{X} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

and the following for final outcomes:

$$y_{ij} = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 \text{mentored}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{not depressed}_{2ij} + \beta \mathbf{X} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

which includes a term for not showing signs of depression at follow-up.

In these models,  $y_{ij}$  represents an outcome observed at follow-up for youth  $i$  in program  $j$ . For models involving outcomes measured dichotomously  $y_{ij}$  takes the form of a logit (the natural log of the odds).

**Table C.1**  
**Regression Results for Intermediate Outcomes**

	Family Support	Other Adult Support	Depression <sup>a</sup>
Age	0.03	0.00	0.98
Female	-0.04	0.38	0.95
Single mother	-0.10	0.21	0.74
Public housing	0.12	0.23	1.66
Number arrests	-0.12*	-0.08	1.02
Months active	0.00	0.05	0.99
Freq. of attendance	-0.12*	-0.05	0.95
Baseline outcome	0.33***	0.21	2.77**
Mentored	-0.10	0.11	0.31**
N	152	153	156
R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.15	0.10

Notes: \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$  \*  $p \leq 0.05$   
<sup>a</sup> Odds ratios presented. Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> reported.

**Table C.2**  
**Regression Results for Final Outcomes**

	Threaten	Yell	Fight	Alcohol	Marijuana	Rearrested
Age	1.12	1.05	1.13	1.05	0.97	0.83**
Female	1.45	0.43	1.74	1.29	0.59	1.09
Single mother	0.93	0.78	1.72***	1.12	0.59	1.25
Public housing	0.89	1.59	0.71	0.97	2.15**	1.09
Number arrests	0.84	0.77***	0.93	1.48***	1.29	1.98***
Months active	0.97	1.04	1.04	1.09*	1.05*	1.01
Freq. of attendance	1.00	0.96	0.78*	1.03	1.00	1.02
Baseline outcome	1.80	1.23	3.60***	6.41**	11.07***	—
Mentored	1.09	1.39	5.59***	1.40	0.25*	0.60
Not depressed at T2	0.35*	0.15***	0.27**	0.57**	0.54*	0.42***
N	146	152	152	148	147	156
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.18	0.22	0.22	0.28	0.13

Notes: \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$  \*  $p \leq 0.05$  Odds ratios presented.







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