BACKGROUND

- Declines in self-esteem during adolescence, a pivotal period of a child’s development, have been linked to anxiety, interpersonal problems, and depression (Hirsch et al., 2000; Koch, 2010; Dowd et al., 2015).
- Cross-age peer mentoring is focused on the mentoring relationship as a way in which to develop mentee self-esteem, connectedness, identity, and academic attitudes. One study found that quality of relationship has positive effects on mentee social skills and self esteem. This means that outcomes were not solely a product of the curriculum (Karcher, 2005).
- Meta-analytic literature point to a few studies that have looked at follow-up assessments to evaluate mentoring programs. Those studies tend to find overall benefits that extend about a year post program (Dubois et al., 2011).
- Yet, conflicting evidence exists, with some studies showing positive effects on mentee social skills and self esteem. This means that outcomes due to strong mentoring relationships while other studies find overall benefits that extend about a year post program (Dubois et al, 2011).
- Data for this study come from The Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) which pairs 7th grade girls with college women mentors for an academic year of combined group and one-on-one mentoring. The girls and their mentors meet weekly in groups of 8-10 mentor-mentee pairs to follow a structured curriculum and engage in activities focused on issues facing adolescent girls. Pairs also spend at least 4 hours of one-on-one time together outside of group each month.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. Is mentoring relationship satisfaction (T1) concurrently associated with mentee self-worth post program (T1)?
RQ2. Is mentoring relationship satisfaction related to mentee self-worth five years post program (T2)?
RQ3. Does mentoring relationship satisfaction predict increases in mentee self-worth from T1 to T2?

METHOD

Strength of Relationships Scale α= 0.921
My Big has lots of good ideas about how to solve a problem. My Big helps me take my mind off things by doing something with me. When I’m with my Big, I feel ignored. When I’m with my Big, I feel mad. When I am with my Big, I feel safe.

Global Self-esteem subscale α=0.721
I am happy with the way I can do most things. I sometimes think I am a failure (“loser”). I am happy with myself as a person. I am the kind of person I want to be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Mean (Range)</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction (Independent Variable)</td>
<td>Strength of Relationship Scale (Rhodes, 2002)</td>
<td>3.19 (1.20-5.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Feelings of Self-Worth (T1) (Dependent Variable)</td>
<td>Self-Esteem Questionnaire (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, &amp; Lease, 1996)</td>
<td>2.88 (1.75-3.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Feelings of Self-Worth (T2) (Dependent Variable)</td>
<td>Self-Esteem Questionnaire (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, &amp; Lease, 1996)</td>
<td>3.01 (1.72-3.75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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- Path Analysis was used to evaluate the association between relationship satisfaction, mentee self worth at T1, and mentee self-worth at T2, while controlling for the effects of age, ethnicity, and free/reduced lunch status.

Figure 1: Path Analysis- RQ1, RQ2, RQ3

Results

- RQ1: Relationship Satisfaction was not concurrently associated to Global Self-Worth at T1, p= 0.80
- RQ2: Relationship Satisfaction was not concurrently associated to Self-Worth at T2, p= 0.67
- RQ3: Relationship satisfaction was not concurrently associated to T1 or T2 global self-worth, p=0.79. T1 self worth was significantly correlated with T2 self worth, p= 0.00

Discussion

- While the current literature suggests there is a decline in girls’ self-esteem at middle school, our findings suggest more stability in self-worth across middle and high school.
- The small sample size is a noteworthy limitation of this study.
- YWLP is a combined group & one on one program, so relationship satisfaction may not impact self-worth in the same way it would in a purely one-on-one program. So in the context of this combined program curriculum, relationships satisfaction might not operate the same way as previous studies.
- Future research should expand on other dimensions of self-esteem such as peer relations, family, school, body image, and sports.
- In addition, research could benefit from exploring what type and level of relationship satisfaction can be obtained in more diversified programs, like YWLP (that combine both one-on-one and group activities), to bolster global feelings of self-worth. This information can help to better inform best practices in mentoring across models.

Participants

Data is drawn from a longitudinal study of YWLP in which girls were surveyed post-program at the end of 7th grade (T1) and again five years later (T2). Girls in the sample all participated in YWLP. They represent three cohorts of girls across three program years.

- n = 110 girls
- Mean age at T1 = 12 years old
- Mean age at T2 = 17 years old
- Black (49.1%, n=54); White (27.3%, n=30); Mixed (10.9%, n=12); Hispanic (9.1%, n=10); Other 2.7% n=3; Native American (0.9%, n=1)

References provided upon request.

Goddess in the Mirror?: Girls Self-Worth and Mentoring
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References provided upon request.