A Process and Outcome Evaluation of "Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment (SAGE)":

A Community-Based Violence Prevention Program for African American Male Adolescents

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

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INTRODUCTION

By the mid-1980s, interpersonal violence among African American male adolescents and young adults was considered an epidemic and identified as a major public health issue. Despite recent declines in violence (Fingerhut, Ingram, & Feldman, 1998; Tonry & Moore, 1998), violent crime and homicide rates continue to be disproportionately high among African American males. African American male adolescents and young adults are almost 10 times more likely than their white male counterparts to be the victim of a homicide (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1995). While homicide represents the worst outcome associated with violence, it is estimated that 100 nonfatal violent incidents occur for every one homicide (Rosenberg & Mercy, 1986). These statistics emphasize the need to identify and implement promising interventions that may prevent violence and violence-related behavior in this at-risk population.

This study reports the findings of an evaluation of a community-based violence prevention demonstration project focusing on African American male adolescents in Durham, North Carolina. Supporting Adolescents with Guidance and Employment (SAGE) was developed and implemented by three organizations in Durham that came together out of their concern about rising levels of youth violence and other risk behaviors and was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The key elements of this multifaceted effort included an Afrocentric guidance and instructional program, coupled with mentoring; a summer jobs training and placement program; and an after-school entrepreneurial training program.

The SAGE study represents an important extension of previous research on the effects of such programs, in that it is the first to combine these popular approaches in an effort to prevent violence among African American male adolescents (Tolan & Guerra, 1996). Although Afrocentric rites of passage (or ROP) programs have been in existence in the United States for some time, few of these programs have been rigorously evaluated (Brookins, 1996; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; Warfield-Coppock, 1992). One study of a non-Afrocentric ROP program targeting sixth graders in Connecticut did yield promising results with respect to the prevention of delinquent behavior, and this program was based on many of the same principles as the SAGE ROP program, including life skills training and mentoring by elders (Blumenkrantz, 1992). Mentoring may represent the most important component of ROP programs as a growing number of studies are providing support for adult mentoring as an effective means of reducing adolescents' risk for delinquent and violent behavior (e.g., Grossman & Garry, 1997).

Recent evaluations of school-based conflict-resolution and anger management skills training programs suggest that these are also promising approaches to violence prevention in the African American male adolescent population. Examples include the Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) and Positive Adolescent Choices Training (PACT) programs (Gabriel, 1996; Gabriel, Hopson, Haskins, & Powell, 1996; Hammond & Yung, 1991, 1993). Both the SEI and PACT

programs were developed for African American adolescents and have been successfully implemented in urban public schools.

Previous studies on the possible benefits of youth employment programs have yielded mixed results. For example, a randomized experiment was conducted with over 20,000 out-of-school youths and young adults to evaluate the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA), which was the basis for the SAGE summer employment component. Findings of this study indicated no improvements in income, educational attainment, or employability among youths who participated in the JTPA training program compared to those in the control group (Bloom et al., 1996). Behavioral outcomes such as violence and other high-risk behaviors were not assessed. In contrast, a recent evaluation of the American Conservation and Youth Service Corps program indicated that employment training coupled with community service could have a positive impact on undereducated and unemployed African American males (Jastrzab, Masker, Blomquist, & Orr, 1996). African American males were more likely than other young adults who participated in this study to show positive gains in personal and social responsibility, educational aspirations, and academic achievement. Program participants were also more likely than control group members to have worked for pay and were less likely to be arrested.

Employment programs that have placed high-risk adolescents in publicly supported jobs have generally proved disappointing, possibly because the jobs were perceived as undesirable (Hahn & Lerman, 1985), unlike other jobs that adolescents have found on their own (Foster, 1995). Indeed, part-time work among adolescents has been *positively* associated with a number of negative outcomes, including substance abuse, interpersonal conflict, and victimization (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993). This finding appears particularly salient among adolescents whose jobs are not relevant to their occupational aspirations. Several reviewers (e.g., Huizinga, Bashinski, & Lizotte, 1991) have concluded that the prognosis for youth employment programs is quite poor.

METHODS

Programmatic Components

SAGE comprised three components, namely an ROP program, a summer jobs training and placement (JTP) program, and an entrepreneurial experience that used the Junior Achievement (JA) model. See an earlier publication, Ringwalt, Graham, Paschall, Browne, and Flewelling (1996), for a detailed description of each programmatic component. These components differed considerably in timing, duration, and intensity. The ROP and JA components were designed and implemented by the Durham Business and Professional Chain, a private entrepreneurial group dedicated to enhancing the quality of economic and cultural life of the Durham African American community. The Durham County Health Department also contributed to the program's implementation. The Durham Employment and Training Office (DETO), which administered a federally funded jobs training and placement program, implemented the JTP component.

The purpose of the ROP, which had a strong Afrocentric focus, was to develop in all the youth (or "initiates") a strong sense of cultural pride and ethnic identity, as well as responsibility

to their community, their peers, and themselves. In biweekly seminars over an 8-month period, the program promoted self-esteem and positive attitudes, as well as the avoidance of a range of risky behaviors. Using the Rites of Passage curriculum (Durham Business and Professional Chain, 1993), which required a combination of didactic and interactional methods, instructors covered such topics as conflict resolution, African American history, male sexuality, and manhood training. On alternate weeks the initiate spent time with an adult African American male mentor who volunteered for the program and who received a small stipend to support recreational activities with the initiate. The mentor was also encouraged to accompany the initiate to the ROP seminars and on occasional field trips. Academic tutoring was provided to initiates who experienced academic difficulties, as was outreach to the families of youth who were disruptive or appeared disengaged, or whose participation in the seminars was sporadic. The ROP program concluded with two major events: an overnight camping trip attended by both initiates and mentors, which concluded with a private rite of initiation into manhood; followed by a graduation ceremony to which the youths' families and the larger community were invited. Further information about the ROP program and the other programmatic components of SAGE is provided by Ringwalt et al. (1996), included as Attachment G. The curriculum for the ROP program is provided in Attachment H.

SAGE's JTP experience began with a brief initiation and training session for the youth enrolled, which included presentations on appropriate behavior and dress and the importance of arriving at work on time. Employers, who were recruited from both the public and voluntary sectors, were similarly trained concerning what they should expect from the youth placed with them and the importance of providing a structured and supervised environment. Youth, whose interests were matched with available worksites where possible, were then placed in a 6-week summer job that paid minimum wage. Job sites included a dentist's office, a local museum and library, and a recreational program. Job counselors initiated weekly contacts with employers and were available as needed to provide transportation for the youth and to resolve problems and issues.

For the JA component, youth met in small groups over a 3-month period to experience the development and implementation of a small business. Under the guidance of volunteer advisors recruited from the local business community, the youth formed a legal corporation, developed a business plan, elected officers, and sold stock to family and friends. They then marketed and sold a product, which consisted of sweatshirts and caps printed with their own design. Officers were paid a modest salary, and each salesman received a small commission. At the end of the period they reimbursed their investors and gave them a share of the company's profit and then dissolved the corporation.

Study Design

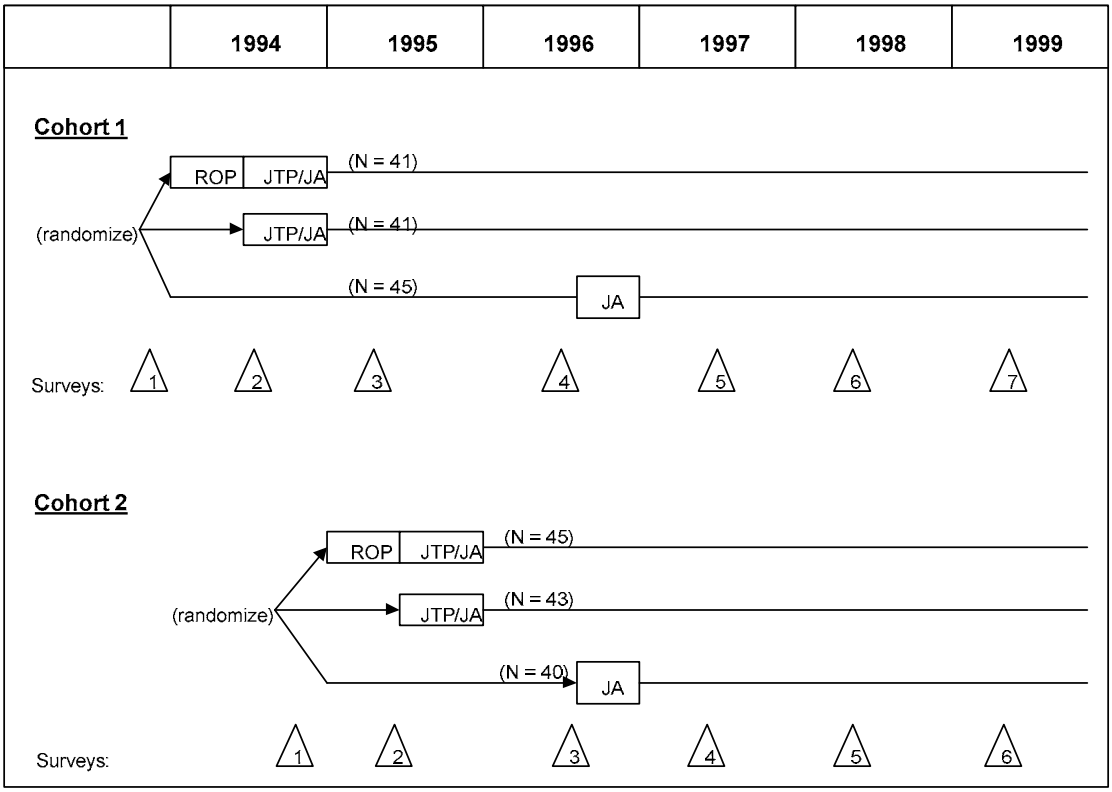
The SAGE Project was assessed by a randomized field trial in which program applicants were randomly assigned to one of three programmatic conditions:

1) Participation in ROP, JTP, and JA
2) Participation in JTP and JA only
3) A comparison group eligible for delayed participation in JA only

These program conditions will be referred to as the ROP/JTP, JTP, and JA groups, respectively.

Two cohorts of eligible youth were recruited in successive years for participation in SAGE. These two groups are designated as Cohorts 1 and 2 in the design plan displayed in Figure 1. Random assignment of participants was conducted after interested youth and their parents completed the necessary application forms and a baseline questionnaire. As shown in the figure, 127 participants in the first cohort were randomly assigned and 128 in the second. Not shown in the figure, and also not included in any analyses presented in this report, are 8 program applicants who were purposively assigned to a specific program due to extenuating circumstances or special needs.

Figure 1. Simplified Design Plan



For both cohorts, the ROP program extended from January through July. The JTP program started in June and was followed by JA in the fall. Survey data collection for the purpose of assessing programmatic effects was conducted in the spring following the conclusion of the programmatic components, approximately 18 months after the baseline survey, and annually thereafter. The survey was also administered in the spring just prior to the start of the JTP. Survey data collection points are indicated in Figure 1 by the numbered triangles, which correspond to data collection waves.

The questionnaires were used to obtain SAGE participants' self-reports of violence-related behaviors as well as other high-risk or problem behaviors. Various psychosocial and background demographic characteristics were also assessed with the questionnaires. The survey

data were augmented with archival data from the school and court systems. The measures derived from these sources are described in the Methods section.

The experimental design employed for the study allows for inferences regarding the effects of exposure to either ROP/JTP or JTP relative to the comparison group, approximately 6 months after the conclusion of the program participation and at annual intervals thereafter. It also allows comparisons between the ROP/JTP and JTP participants, although this is not a primary focus for the study. The JA program was considered the weakest of the three programmatic components, and therefore was thought to provide an acceptable comparison group against which to compare the effects of the much more intensive ROP and JTP programs. Furthermore, although most of the youth who were assigned to receive the ROP and JTP programs did participate at least to some extent in these programs, participation in JA was extremely low, especially among those in the comparison group. This low participation rate suggests that the contribution of the JA component to any observed programmatic effects is likely to be inconsequential. Furthermore, the lack of participation in JA by youth in the comparison group implies that this group should be considered as a "no treatment" group, even though all youth in this group were provided the opportunity to participate.

Participant Recruitment and Assignment to Program Conditions

African American males 12 to 16 years old who were living in Durham County, North Carolina, in 1993 and 1994 were eligible for enrollment into the SAGE program. A variety of methods were used to identify and recruit the youths, including announcements on local radio stations, referrals from school guidance and juvenile court counselors, and direct contact with parents and youths in public housing developments. The SAGE program was described to the youths and their parents in small group settings. Youths and their parents were asked to read and sign consent forms and the youths were also asked to complete a baseline questionnaire.

A total of 263 youths were enrolled into the SAGE program over a 2-year period in two cohorts of approximately equal size. However, for various reasons, only 255 of these youths were actually eligible for the program. Of the 255 youths in both cohorts who completed baseline questionnaires, 86 were randomly assigned to the ROP, JTP, and JA condition (together referred to as simply ROP/JTP): 84 to the JTP and JA condition (JTP); and 85 to the comparison or control group (delayed JA only).

Process Measures and Process Data Collection Procedures

The process evaluation provided detailed descriptions of the implementation process, content, and operations of the SAGE program. The goals of the process evaluation were to:

- Describe the process of implementing and evaluating a community-based violence prevention program
- Determine if the intervention was implemented as planned
- Measure the program dosage each participant received

- Assess secondary or indirect program effects on youth and other program participants

- Provide formative data for ongoing program modification as appropriate.

In addition to the more traditional process evaluation orientation, a more in-depth, qualitative exploration was included to provide detailed insights addressing the following questions:

- How did the implementation of SAGE differ from its initial design, and what unanticipated circumstances accounted for these changes?

- What factors differentiated youth who gained a great deal from those who did not gain very much from the program?

- How did participants' opinions and expectations about the program change from pre- to post-program?

- What could be done to strengthen the program?

- What are the crucial issues and barriers that communities might face when considering implementing a youth-oriented violence prevention program like SAGE?

The process evaluation provided essential program monitoring data for the assessment of implementation of the intervention activities. It also supplied feedback to the program staff for use in ongoing program refinement to offer the strongest intervention possible for the youth. Multiple methods and sources were used in the data collection including focus groups, interviews, program reviews, participation record review, document review, observation, and tracking of dropouts. A more detailed description of the process evaluation procedures and findings from this effort is provided in Attachment A. Copies of the process evaluation instruments are included in Attachment B.

Outcome Measures and Data Collection and Processing Procedures

Behavioral outcome measures were based on both self-reports and archival data. In the baseline and follow-up surveys, youths were asked when they most recently engaged in a variety of risk behaviors, including violence-related behaviors such as physical fighting, carrying a gun or knife, receiving medical treatment for an intentionally inflicted injury, and using a gun or knife to injure someone else. With regard to other risk behaviors, youths were asked when they most recently had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row, used an illicit drug such as marijuana, sold any amount of illicit drugs, intentionally damaged or vandalized property, or had sexual intercourse. Possible responses were "within the past month," "between one and six months ago," "between six months and one year ago," "over one year ago," and "never." A complete set of the survey items used for SAGE surveys, up to and including the 30-month Cohort B data collection (i.e., Wave 4), is included in Attachment C. A data dictionary that documents the names of variables corresponding to survey items used in each wave is provided in Attachment D.

The survey data were collected using audiocassette tapes on which the questions were recorded. Participants listened to the questions on their own personal tape players with headphones and recorded their responses on answer sheets. This method was used to mitigate the potential problems of low reading ability and respondent fatigue and to promote a sense of privacy. The procedure also appeared to enhance the respondents' attention to, and comprehension of, the survey items. The recorded questions were read from a script by a young adult male, and careful efforts were made to pace the questions in a manner that allowed respondents to attend to them without undue delays or pauses. Respondents were given clear instructions on how to use the tape players and assurances of the confidentiality of their responses. The answer sheets contained coded participant identification numbers but did not contain any information that could be used to directly identify any respondent. Respondents marked their answers on carefully numbered answer sheets that corresponded to the numbered items recorded on the tapes. Survey administration through 1994 was conducted in scheduled group settings in either the auditorium of a local university or classrooms of the Durham Employment and Training Office. Starting in 1995, interviews were conducted by experienced field interview staff in respondents' homes. The data collection procedures for the project were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Research Triangle Institute at the outset of the program and annually thereafter.

The information on the answer sheets was professionally keyed and then checked for out-of-range and inconsistent values. Suspect data were rechecked against the original answer sheets and rekeyed when necessary. Although a number of respondents were identified who provided a significant number of inconsistent responses, either within a single survey or across waves, no overt or systematic patterns of invalid reporting that would indicate purposeful misrepresentation were identified. Consequently, the survey answer sheets from all respondents were retained for subsequent analysis.

Self-reported data were augmented by school suspension records, hospital records for intentionally caused injuries, and contact with the juvenile and adult courts of Durham County. Specifically, the middle and high schools in which SAGE youths were enrolled in Durham County provided annual records of any in- or out-of-school suspensions and reasons for the

suspensions; the Duke University Medical Center's Emergency Department provided records of all hospital and emergency room visits by SAGE youths; and the Durham County Juvenile Court provided access to files of any SAGE youths who had come under its supervision. Court records of adult arrest are in the public domain and were obtained from the Durham County Court.

Analysis Procedures

Databases for the process evaluation effort were created for each of the process data collection forms, and results were analyzed using SAS (Statistical Analysis System). Focus group and interview data were first transcribed and compiled, and then coded and analyzed with the qualitative analysis package "ASKSAM," which allows data to be coded by multiple themes and then sorts the data accordingly. Once ASKSAM had sorted the data by code, two analysts familiar with the SAGE project reviewed the results and independently reviewed the data for key themes. Two reviewers were used, to improve interrater reliability for themes developed. Only those themes on which the two raters agreed are included in the results presented. These themes were then further developed and described in a narrative description of key issues and processes involved in the implementation of the SAGE program and its perceived effects.

The analysis plan for the outcome data focused on self-reported measures of risky behaviors within the past year obtained through the respondent surveys described in the preceding section. In addition to examining each of 10 key behavioral measures discretely, we created three behavioral indices. The first of these indices measured the number of key risky behaviors reported, with index values ranging from 0 to 10. Two additional indices were constructed to capture (a) violent behaviors and (b) nonviolent behaviors, both of which were subsets of the larger set of 10 behaviors used to define the first index.

Descriptive analyses included the calculation of mean risk behavior index values for each of the three treatment conditions at baseline and again at 18 and 30 months. Statistical tests were then conducted to determine if changes in mean values over time differed among youths in each of the two treatment conditions versus the comparison group. Separate analyses were conducted for changes between baseline and the 18-month follow-up, and between baseline and the 30-month follow-up. To accommodate the within-subject correlations over time between baseline and follow-up surveys, generalized estimating equation (GEE) models were used in the calculation of the significance levels and confidence intervals for the parameter estimates. The SAS GENMOD procedure, using the REPEATED and UNSTRUCTURED options, was used to conduct these analyses.

Similar procedures were applied to each discrete behavioral measure, except that a logistic GEE model was employed to handle the binary nature of these outcome measures. Both the ordinary and logistic regression models were run both with and without controls for demographic background influences of age, father presence, and free school lunch status. The actual levels of statistical significance (i.e., the *p*-values) of model parameters are provided in all findings that are presented. Due to the relatively small group sizes, effects that are statistically significant at the .10 level are explicitly noted. For justification and further discussion of the use of more liberal significance levels in small-sample studies, see Greenland (1989), Walker (1986), and Fleiss (1986).

RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

Selected behavioral and demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1 for the entire cohort of 255 SAGE youths and for the subgroups of youths assigned to each program condition.

Table 1. Characteristics of SAGE Youths, by Program Condition

Characteristic[b]	Total Sample (*N* = 255)	Program Condition[a] ROP/JTP (*n* = 86)	JTP (*n* = 84)	JA (*n* = 85)
Violent Behaviors				
Was in a physical fight (%)	63	67	63	59
Was treated for an intentional injury (%)	9	11	8	7
Carried a gun (%)	22	29	15	24
Carried a knife (%)	30	40	23	27
Used a knife or gun to injure someone (%)	9	12	6	9
Other High-Risk Behaviors				
Sold illicit drugs (%)	12	13	11	12
Used drugs (%)	18	21	14	18
Had 5+ alcoholic drinks on same day (%)	12	12	11	13
Engaged in sexual intercourse (%)	55	64	45	56
Damaged property (%)	36	41	32	36
Background Characteristics				
Age (mean)	14	14	14	14
Received free or reduced-price lunch (%)	53	48	52	58
Mother did not complete high school (%)	18	22	16	15
Not living with a father or father-figure (%)	50	55	41	54

[a] ROP/JTP = rites of passage, summer job training and placement, and Junior Achievement;
JTP = summer job training and placement and Junior Achievement only;
JA = comparison group that received delayed JA program only.

[b] All behaviors occurred within the year previous to the baseline survey.

Youths' mean age was 14; over half (53%) of the youths received free or reduced-price lunch at school; 18% had mothers who did not complete high school; and half of the youths were living without a father or father-figure. Sociodemographic characteristics did not differ across the three program conditions, though youths in the JTP condition were somewhat less likely than youths in the other two program conditions to be living without a father or father-figure. Over 60% of the youths reported that they had been in a physical fight with someone during the previous year, while 22% had carried a gun, and 30% had carried a knife. Smaller percentages of youths reported that they were hurt in a fight (27%), needed medical attention for an intentional injury (9%), or used a gun or knife to injure someone else (9%). These behaviors did not differ significantly across the three program conditions, although youths assigned to the ROP/JTP condition were somewhat more likely than youths in the other two program conditions to report weapon-carrying in the past year and use of a weapon to injure someone. The mean number of past-year violence-related behaviors was 1.3.

Other past-year risky behaviors reported by the youths were selling illegal drugs (12%), using drugs (18%), heavy alcohol use (12%), having sexual intercourse (55%), and damaging property (36%). Youths assigned to the ROP/JTP condition were somewhat more likely to report that they had used drugs, had sexual intercourse, and damaged property. The mean number of past-year nonviolent risk behaviors was 1.3, and the mean number of violent and nonviolent problem behaviors was 2.6. As before, these mean levels were somewhat higher for youths assigned to the ROP/JTP condition.

Although follow-up response rates were satisfactory, we conducted additional analyses to determine whether loss to follow-up might have introduced bias into our analysis results. Follow-up participation rates, by condition, are provided in Table 2 and key background characteristics of follow-up participants and nonparticipants are shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Baseline and Follow-Up Sample Sizes (and Rates)

	Baseline	**18-month**		**30-month**		**All 3 Waves**	
	N	***N***	**(%)**	***N***	**(%)**	***N***	**(%)**
ROP	86	71	(82.6)	72	(83.7)	66	(76.7)
JTP	84	70	(83.3)	70	(83.3)	64	(76.2)
JA	85	72	(84.7)	67	(78.8)	63	(74.1)
Total	255	213	(83.5)	209	(82.0)	193	(75.7)

Comparisons of SAGE youths who did and did not participate in the 18-month or 30-month follow-up interviews with those who did participate reveal few significant differences in baseline demographic and behavioral characteristics. Youths who were living with their father were somewhat less likely to participate in the 30-month follow-up interview than youths who were not living with a father or father-figure. Youths whose mother did not complete high school were also significantly less likely to participate in the 30-month follow-up interview than youths

Table 3. Baseline Variable Comparisons of SAGE Youths Who Did and Did Not Participate in the 18-Month or 30-Month Follow-Up Interviews

Baseline Variable[a]	18-Month		30-Month	
	Yes (*n* = 212)	No (*n* = 43)	Yes (*n* = 209)	No (*n* = 46)
Violent Behaviors				
Was in a physical fight (%)	63.7	59.5	62.9	63.0
Was treated for an intentional injury (%)	9.4	4.8	8.6	8.7
Carried a gun (%)	22.5	21.9	22.0	24.4
Carried a knife (%)	31.3	21.4	30.4	26.1
Used a knife or gun to injure someone (%)	9.4	7.3	9.1	8.7
Other High-Risk Behaviors				
Sold illicit drugs (%)	11.3	14.3	11.5	13.0
Used drugs (%)	17.8	16.7	16.3	23.9
Had 5+ alcoholic drinks on same day (%)	11.7	11.9	11.5	13.0
Engaged in sexual intercourse (%)	51.5	73.2**	51.7	70.5**
Damaged property (%)	37.4	29.3	37.2	31.1
Problem behavior index (mean)	2.6	2.6	2.8	2.6
Background Characteristics				
Age (mean)	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
Received free or reduced-price lunch (%)	51.5	57.5	51.0	59.5
Mother did not complete high school (%)	15.9	25.8	14.5	31.4**
Father present in home (%)	47.9	60.0	47.3	60.9*

*$p < .10$. **$p < .05$.

[a]All baseline variables are based on data collected in baseline interviews. Behaviors occurred in the previous year.

whose mother did complete high school. Youths who had engaged in sexual intercourse in the previous year were less likely to participate in 18-month and 30-month follow-up interviews than youths who had not engaged in sexual intercourse. However, youths who did and did not participate in baseline and 18-month or 30-month follow-up interviews were similar with respect to age, whether they received free lunch at school, and whether they had engaged in a number of other problem behaviors, including weapon-carrying, using a weapon to injure someone, alcohol and drug use, and selling illicit drugs. Participation rates also did not differ appreciably across the treatment conditions. Overall, these similarities suggest that loss to follow-up did not introduce bias into our analysis results.

Results from Process Evaluation

The process evaluation results suggest the SAGE program was implemented with only minor deviations from the initial program model. Process monitoring data reveal that ROP and JTP programs were well-attended and generally well-received by the youth participants. Participants for both the ROP and JTP components reported benefits from the program, although the qualitative data suggest the greatest benefit for the ROP youth. Other program staff, such as the mentors and facilitators, also reported benefitting from participation in the program. The JA program was also implemented as planned, but the number of youth who actually participated in the program was low. The process evaluation also identified some problematic aspects of both the ROP and JTP programs. These included possible mismatches between mentors and youth, less-than-optimal levels of mentor contact with the youth, and lack of guidance and supervision provided to some youth in their summer jobs. A more detailed narrative describing the process evaluation findings is included in Attachment A.

The SAGE project also yielded some valuable lessons with respect to the process of designing and implementing a multi-faceted preventive intervention in a community setting. These lessons speak to some of the challenges inherent in working with community-based organizations within the context of a research study. Lessons learned, along with recommendations for avoiding or overcoming obstacles, have been discussed elsewhere (see Ringwalt et al., 1996; in Attachment G).

Impacts on Behavioral Outcomes

As indicated earlier, 10 key behavioral outcomes were identified prior to the analysis as the most relevant and important self-reported behaviors on which to base the assessment of programmatic impacts. The baseline prevalence values for these measures were provided in Table 1. All measures were defined on the basis of respondents' reports of having engaged in each behavior within the past year.

To simplify the assessment of programmatic impacts on these behaviors, three summary indices were created. The first was the total number of each of the 10 behaviors reported in the past year, which could range from 0 to 10. The second and third were subindices of the first and included either the five violence-related behaviors or the five non-violence-related behaviors. Graphical depictions of the mean values for these three indices, by program condition and data collection wave, are provided in Figures 2, 3, and 4. The baseline and 18-month mean values are based on all participants who completed the baseline and 18-month surveys. Because the groups of participants that completed the 18-month and 30-month surveys were slightly different samples, the 30-month mean values shown in the figures have been adjusted to compensate for baseline differences between these two groups, thus making them more directly comparable. The actual index values depicted in the figures are provided in Attachment E.

Figure 2. Mean Risk Behavior Index Scores, by Treatment Group

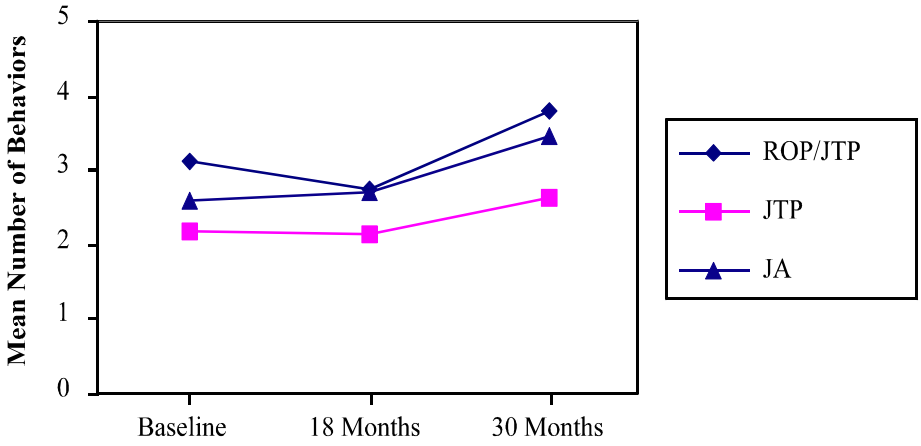


Figure 3. Mean Violent Behavior Index Scores, by Treatment Group

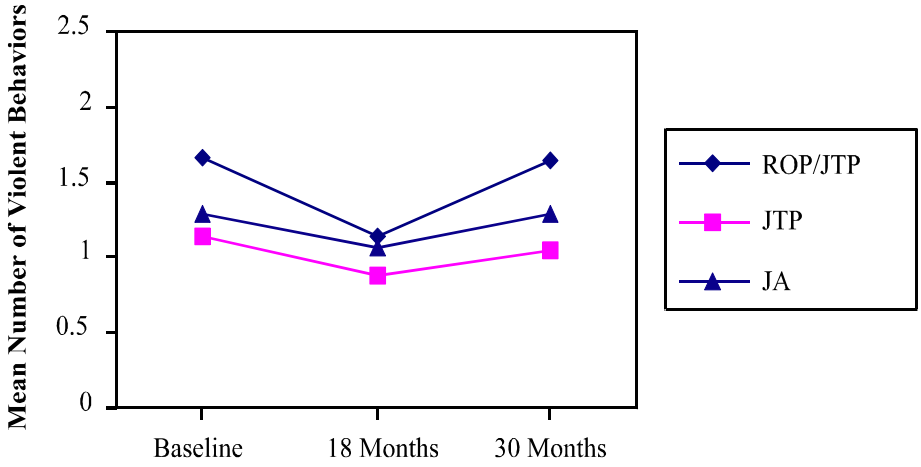
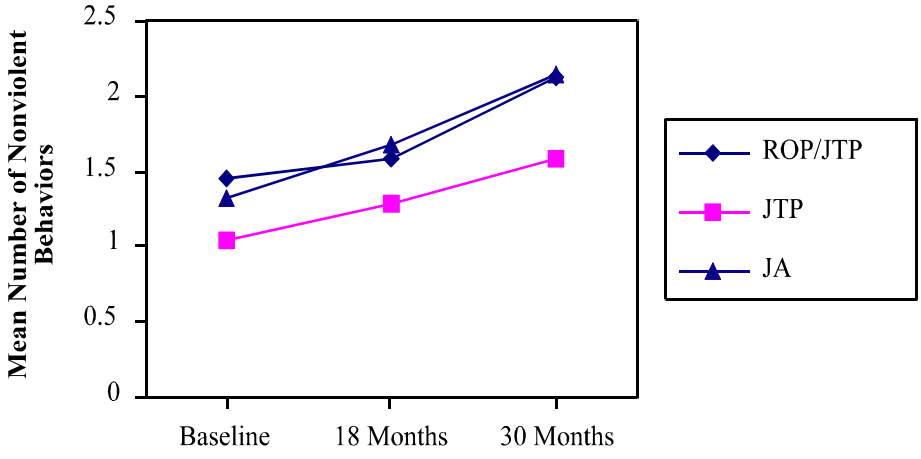


Figure 4. Mean Nonviolent Behavior Index Scores, by Treatment Group



As indicated in Figure 2, the mean number of problem behaviors reported by the comparison group increased slightly, from 2.6 at baseline to 2.7 at the 18-month follow-up. Over the same period, the mean number of problem behaviors in the ROP/JTP group declined from 3.1 to 2.7, and the mean for the JTP group remained virtually unchanged, at approximately 2.2. From the 18-month to 30-month waves, however, the problem behavior index for the ROP/JTP group increased more than the corresponding change among the comparison group.

Similar data are provided for the violent and nonviolent subindices in Figures 3 and 4. Although the mean number of violent behaviors reported in the comparison group actually decreased at the 18-month follow-up, the decrease was even more pronounced in the ROP/JTP group, and also slightly more pronounced in the JTP group. Again, however, any apparent positive impacts in the ROP/JTP group at 18 months appeared to be largely negated at 30 months.

Mean values for the nonviolent behavior indices increased in all three groups between baseline and the first follow-up. The increase, however, was less pronounced for the ROP/JTP group and thus followed a similar pattern of an apparently favorable impact of assignment to the ROP/JTP condition at 18 months. As with violent behaviors, however, this apparent effect was not fully sustained at 30 months.

Table 4 reports the results of the statistical analyses conducted to quantify the magnitude of the programmatic impacts on the problem behavior indices and to assess their statistical significance. The results are from GEE models used to assess the changes in the mean index values over time in each of the two program conditions relative to the comparison group, as captured by the condition-by-wave interaction terms in the specified models. There were only very slight differences in the results based on whether demographic controls for age, father presence in the home, and free school lunch status were included in the models. Therefore, the results shown in the tables are from models that did not include any statistical control variables.

Table 4. Parameter Estimates and Tests of Significance for Assessment of the ROP/JTP Effects on Problem Behavior Indices[a]

Index/Condition	18-Month Effect (*p*-value)		30-Month Effect (*p*-value)	
All problem behaviors				
ROP/JTP	-.48	(.19)	-.31	(.46)
JTP	-.18	(.62)	-.34	(.42)
Violent behaviors				
ROP/JTP	-.27	(.20)	-.09	(.67)
JTP	-.05	(.78)	-.10	(.67)
Other risky behaviors				
ROP/JTP	-.21	(.36)	-.23	(.38)
JTP	-.13	(.56)	-.24	(.35)

[a]Parameters are the GEE regression coefficients for the treatment condition by time interaction effects and reflect the net change since baseline in the mean index value of the treatment group relative to the comparison group.

The parameter estimates indicate an effect at 18 months in the desired direction, for both the ROP/JTP and JTP conditions, across all three problem behavior indices. None of these effects, however, is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ or even $p < .10$ levels. The effects of the ROP/JTP condition were, however, significant at the $p < .20$ level for both the overall risk behavior index and the violent behavior index. This pattern of encouraging although not statistically significant results was sustained at the 30-month follow-up as well. The magnitude of the effects for the ROP/JTP condition was considerably smaller, however, while for the JTP condition the effects were slightly stronger than those observed at 18 months.

To provide greater specificity regarding programmatic impacts on the behavioral outcomes of interest, the results of GEE logistic models run separately on each of the 10 behavioral outcomes are provided in Table 5. The parameters shown in the table are the coefficients for the treatment condition-by-wave interaction terms and represent the net change in the log odds of each behavior by participants in the treatment condition relative to the comparison group. Negative coefficients represent an effect in the desired direction. As in the case of the behavioral index analyses, statistical controls for background demographic variables had little effect on the results and therefore were not included in the final models.

The ROP/JTP effect at 18 months was in the desired direction for eight of the behavioral outcomes examined and statistically significant at the $p < .10$ level for two of these outcomes: carrying a gun and selling illegal drugs. Graphical displays of the treatment group differences for carrying a gun and selling drugs are provided in Figures 5 and 6. Effects of the JTP condition were in the desired direction for 7 of the 10 outcomes, although they were generally much smaller than for the combined program group and none was significant at the $p < .10$ level. The analysis of the 30-month data again suggested a pattern of relative changes in the desired direction, although none of the effects was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. The encouraging results for the ROP/JTP condition with respect to carrying a gun and selling drugs were much weaker at 30 months, although a desirable effect at the $p < .10$ level was observed for damaging property. No JTP effects at the $p < .10$ level were observed for any of the outcome measures.

An assessment of the programmatic impacts on various psychosocial constructs that reflect goals of the SAGE program components (e.g., increased self-esteem, educational aspirations, beliefs supporting aggression) found no statistically significant effects. The effects were also relatively small and none approached standard levels of required statistical significance. As with the behavioral outcomes, however, the majority of measures showed relative changes in the desired direction for the ROP/JTP condition at 18 months. Additional analyses will concentrate on the relationships among these psychosocial variables as well as their relationships with behavioral measures of interest.

Outcome data from archival sources are still in the process of being collected and coded, and therefore analyses of these data were not available for inclusion in this report. Subsequent analyses of programmatic impacts will focus on the archival data as well as the most recent waves of survey data (collected in 1998 and to be collected in 1999).

Table 5. Parameter Estimates and Tests of Significance for Assessment of ROP and JTP Effects on Individual Problem Behaviors[a]

Behavior/Condition	18-Month Effect (*p*-value)		30-Month Effect (*p*-value)	
Carried gun				
ROP/JTP	-.85	(.08)	-.10	(.81)
JTP	+.19	(.71)	+.25	(.60)
Carried knife				
ROP/JTP	-.29	(.47)	-.24	(.53)
JTP	-.25	(.58)	-.15	(.75)
Fought				
ROP	-.11	(.41)	+.18	(.65)
JTP	-.26	(.79)	-.09	(.92)
Received treatment for intentional injury				
ROP/JTP	+1.43	(.24)	-.70	(.38)
JTP	+1.47	(.23)	-.42	(.62)
Used knife or gun to hurt someone				
ROP/JTP	-.84	(.27)	-.30	(.67)
JTP	-.37	(.69)	-.88	(.39)
Used drugs				
ROP/JTP	+.05	(.91)	+.37	(.37)
JTP	-.02	(.97)	+.06	(.89)
Sold drugs				
ROP/JTP	-1.16	(.08)	-.36	(.51)
JTP	-.33	(.58)	-.53	(.36)
Had five or more drinks				
ROP/JTP	-.68	(.23)	-.12	(.82)
JTP	-.30	(.57)	-.33	(.53)
Had sexual intercourse				
ROP/JTP	-.05	(.89)	-.58	(.16)
JTP	+.13	(.72)	-.21	(.59)
Damaged property				
ROP/JTP	-.01	(.98)	-.76	(.06)
JTP	-.23	(.58)	.00	(.99)

[a]Parameters are the GEE logistic regression coefficients for the treatment condition by time interaction effects and reflect the net change in the log odds of each behavior in the treatment condition relative to the comparison group.

Figure 5. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Carrying a Gun in Past Year, by Treatment Group

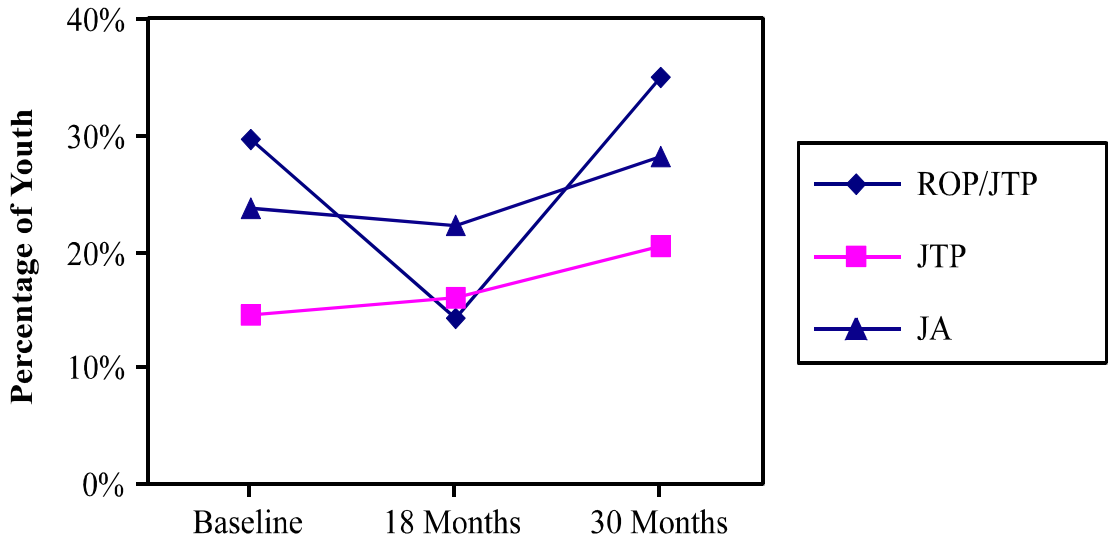
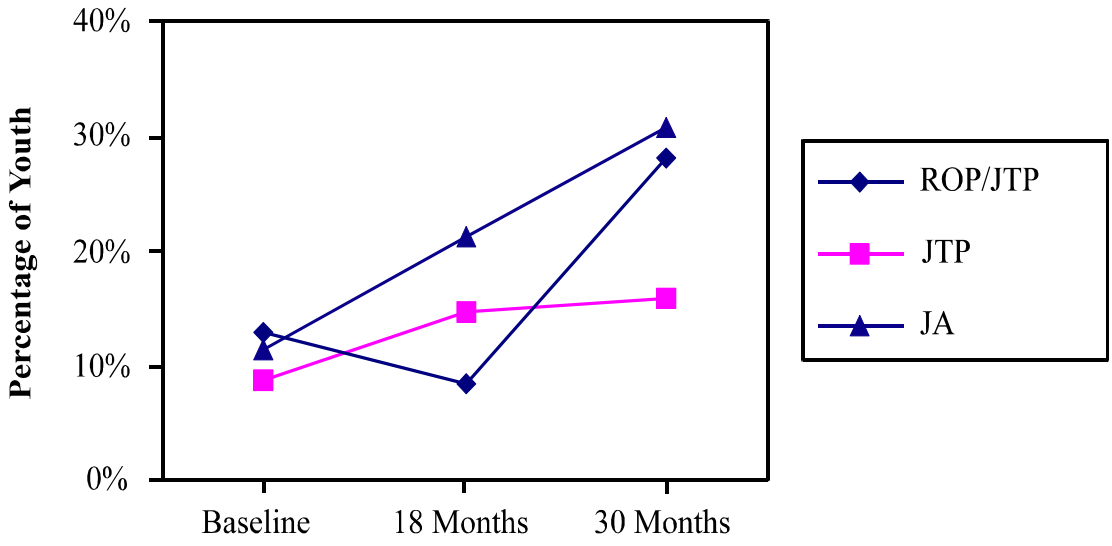


Figure 6. Percentage of Respondents Reporting Selling Illicit Drugs in Past Year, by Treatment Group



DISCUSSION

Summary of Key Findings

Results from the evaluation of the SAGE project provide encouraging and suggestive evidence that participation in a 7-month Afrocentric guidance and educational training program, combined with mentoring, summer job training and placement, and hands-on entrepreneurial training, can reduce the likelihood of violence-related behavior and other health risk behaviors among African American male adolescents. Of the several behavioral self-report outcomes that were examined, the largest apparent benefits were observed for carrying a gun and selling illegal drugs. Findings for heavy drinking and injuring others with a weapon were also encouraging. The results provide much less support for the efficacy of a combined summer jobs program and entrepreneurial training without the guidance components, although even for this condition the results were generally in the desired direction. The absence of programmatic impacts at the rigorous and traditionally required $p < .05$ level of statistical significance, however, precludes drawing firm and unequivocal conclusions regarding program effectiveness at this time.

Despite the absence of statistical significance, the pattern of results that was obtained does offer tentative support for the potential efficacy of preventive interventions like the ROP and JTP combination provided by SAGE. First, there was a fairly consistent and desirable pattern of changes in the treatment conditions relative to the control group. At the 18-month follow-up, relative changes in the ROP/JTP group were in the desired direction for 8 of the 10 outcomes, and for 7 of the 10 outcomes in the JTP group. Secondly, as expected, the more intensive intervention group (ROP/JTP) generally exhibited larger positive impacts at 18 months than the less intensive condition (JTP). Third, the data obtained at the 30-month follow-up indicate a waning of programmatic impacts when assessed over a longer follow-up period, a pattern that is consistent with findings from many other evaluations of preventive interventions (Bell et al., 1993; Glynn, 1989).

Interpretation and Implications of Findings

The suggestive—although not definitive—findings of the outcome evaluation invite a careful consideration of methodological features that may have adversely affected the results and assessment of their statistical significance. First, it is important to note that the relatively small group sizes in this study diminished the possibilities for finding statistically significant effects. The magnitude of the apparent effects could certainly be considered as meaningful if they could be substantiated using larger samples. This may be a problem for other evaluative studies that include a mentoring component, as these programs are typically managed at a local level and funding availability may discourage or preclude very large programs with the hundreds of youth-mentor pairs that would be required for more powerful assessments. Evaluative studies of projects such as SAGE would be especially appropriate candidates for a meta-analysis, in which findings from multiple studies are combined to provide a more powerful test of programmatic impacts.

Another mitigating factor that may have reduced the observed effects of SAGE's programmatic components, and corresponding levels of statistical significance, is the fact that youth who were included in the programmatic conditions had varying levels of exposure to the

actual programs. In particular, we know that some youth who were assigned to the ROP/JTP condition simply did not participate in the program activities beyond the first or second week. Although all randomly assigned youth were included in the analyses in order to eliminate potential bias due to selective program attrition, it stands to reason that those youth who had minimal exposure to the program would be unlikely to experience positive programmatic effects and thus would dilute any positive impacts due to the programs being evaluated. This possibility is still being assessed.

With respect to program implementation, the process evaluation results indicated that programmatic components were generally executed as planned. Although some problematic aspects of these components were noted and recommendations made for enhancements in future interventions based on the SAGE model (see Attachment A), it is likely that the SAGE programmatic experience is an accurate reflection of the overall quality of implementation that might be expected of community-based preventive interventions that depend to a significant degree upon the voluntary participation of community members. Overall, it does not appear that implementation failure alone could be responsible for the lack of more definitive positive findings regarding the efficacy of the SAGE program.

Two alternative explanations, in addition to the methodological considerations raised above, deserve attention. First, the type of intervention activities evaluated in this study simply may not be sufficiently powerful to produce significant reductions in the occurrence of the behavioral outcomes examined in this study. This issue, of course, lies at the heart of the purpose for conducting this study, and the conclusion that interventions like our ROP and JTP programs do not result in reductions in violence and other high-risk behaviors remains a viable one. Although the pattern and direction of the results obtained seem to offer a more positive, if tentative, assessment, the traditional standards for rigorous scientific evidence of program efficacy were not attained. This conclusion would not contradict those of a number of previous studies on the effects of mentoring programs and employment programs on juvenile delinquency. In general, little empirical support for the effectiveness of these programs on reducing or preventing delinquent behaviors has been generated to date (Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano, & Neckerman, 1995), although there are a few studies that provide a more positive assessment for mentoring programs (Grossman & Garry, 1997).

A second and related possible explanation for the lack of more definitive effects on the behavioral outcomes is that the duration of the intervention was too brief. As the baseline data indicate, a significant proportion of the study population was at high risk for problem behaviors, and many were already engaging in such activities. More generally, the high-risk environments in which many urban African American youth live have been shown to be characterized by multiple negative influences including economic distress and instability, structural deterioration, exposure to violence, racism, and lack of social and economic opportunity (Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 1997; Greenberg & Schnieder, 1994; Paschall & Hubbard, 1998; Taylor, 1991). In this larger context, it may be unrealistic to expect any intervention of limited duration, especially in the absence of significant environmental change, to achieve substantial behavioral effects. Given the suggestive evidence of some short-term positive impacts of the SAGE program, a similar model applied over a more extended time span in the lives of the participants may yield stronger and more lasting effects. A recommendation for sustained intervention, or at least periodic booster sessions, over the course of several years would be consistent with the

findings of previous prevention research (Bell, Ellickson, & Harrison, 1993; Glynn, 1989; Thornberry, Huizinga, & Loeber, 1995).

Study Limitations and Future Research Needs

One significant limitation of the study already discussed is the relatively small sizes of the experimental groups, which may have prevented detection of significant programmatic effects. Because studies of comprehensive programs such as SAGE are often based on modest sample sizes, simultaneous consideration of multiple evaluative studies of ROP and mentoring programs within a meta-analytic framework could be very informative.

The randomized design of the study is seen as a strength that is often not attainable in evaluations of preventive interventions. Randomization helps to mitigate a number of possible threats to the internal validity of a study that are problematic in quasi-experiemental research. Even so, the design used for this study has important limitations that need to be considered in the interpretation of the findings. First, because the ROP and mentoring programs were intrinsically linked, it is not possible to empirically distinguish the separate effects of these programmatic aspects of the ROP experience. Although it made programmatic sense to combine these two pieces into a single intervention, the results do not address the question of which of these activities is more important, or whether they are only effective when combined. Relatedly, it is also important to note that ROP (including mentoring) was offered only in combination with the JTP component. The pattern of findings observed to date suggests that it is the ROP component that is most responsible for the suggestive positive impacts observed for the ROP/JTP condition. The absence of an ROP-only condition, however, leaves open the alternative explanation that ROP and JTP effects are interactive and only obtained when youth are exposed to both of these interventions.

Another limitation to be borne in mind is that findings presented to date are based only on self-report data. Previous studies have generally supported the validity of self-report data from adolescents, even on sensitive behaviors such as substance use and delinquent acts, as long as survey administration procedures conducive to candid and complete reporting are followed (Johnston & O'Malley, 1985). Although such procedures were followed in this study, and the quality of the self-reported information appears to be high, possibilities for differential bias in reporting across the treatment conditions cannot be ruled out. Planned analysis of archival data from schools and the criminal justice system will serve to address this concern.

Further analyses will address a number of additional research questions. These include questions regarding the long-term effects of the SAGE program (using data from surveys conducted 42 and 54 months after baseline, plus archival record data), programmatic effects on intervening psychosocial variables, and an assessment of dose-response relationships using data on level of participation collected through the process evaluation effort.

It is apparent from this study that further research, including meta-analytic studies, is necessary to advance our understanding about the extent to which popular prevention strategies such as mentoring, job training, and job placement, as well as ethocentric approaches such as the Rites of Passage program, are effective in preventing violence and other high-risk behaviors among African American youth. There has been a paucity of well-designed research studies in

this area (Dahlberg, 1998), and those that have been conducted have produced, at best, a mixed and not particularly encouraging set of findings. The findings from this study allow some room for optimism, but the lack of precision in the findings due to the relatively small sample sizes creates uncertainties that can only be addressed through additional evaluative research with more and/or larger groups.

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Attachments

A. Process Evaluation Procedures and Findings

B. Process Evaluation Instruments

C. Outcome Evaluation Instruments

D. Survey Data Dictionary

E. Numerical Values of Points Plotted on Figures 1 through 5

F. Publications to Date

G. Description of the SAGE Project Published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine

H. Rites of Passage Curricula

Attachment A

Process Evaluation Procedures and Findings

METHODOLOGY

The process evaluation provided detailed descriptions of the implementation process, content, and operations of the SAGE program. The goals of the process evaluation were to:

- Describe the process of implementing and evaluating a community-based violence prevention program
- Determine if the intervention was implemented as planned
- Measure the program dosage each participant received
- Assess secondary or indirect program effects on youth and the community at large
- Provide formative data for ongoing program modification as appropriate.

In addition to the more traditional process evaluation orientation, an in-depth qualitative exploration was included to provide detailed answers to the following questions:

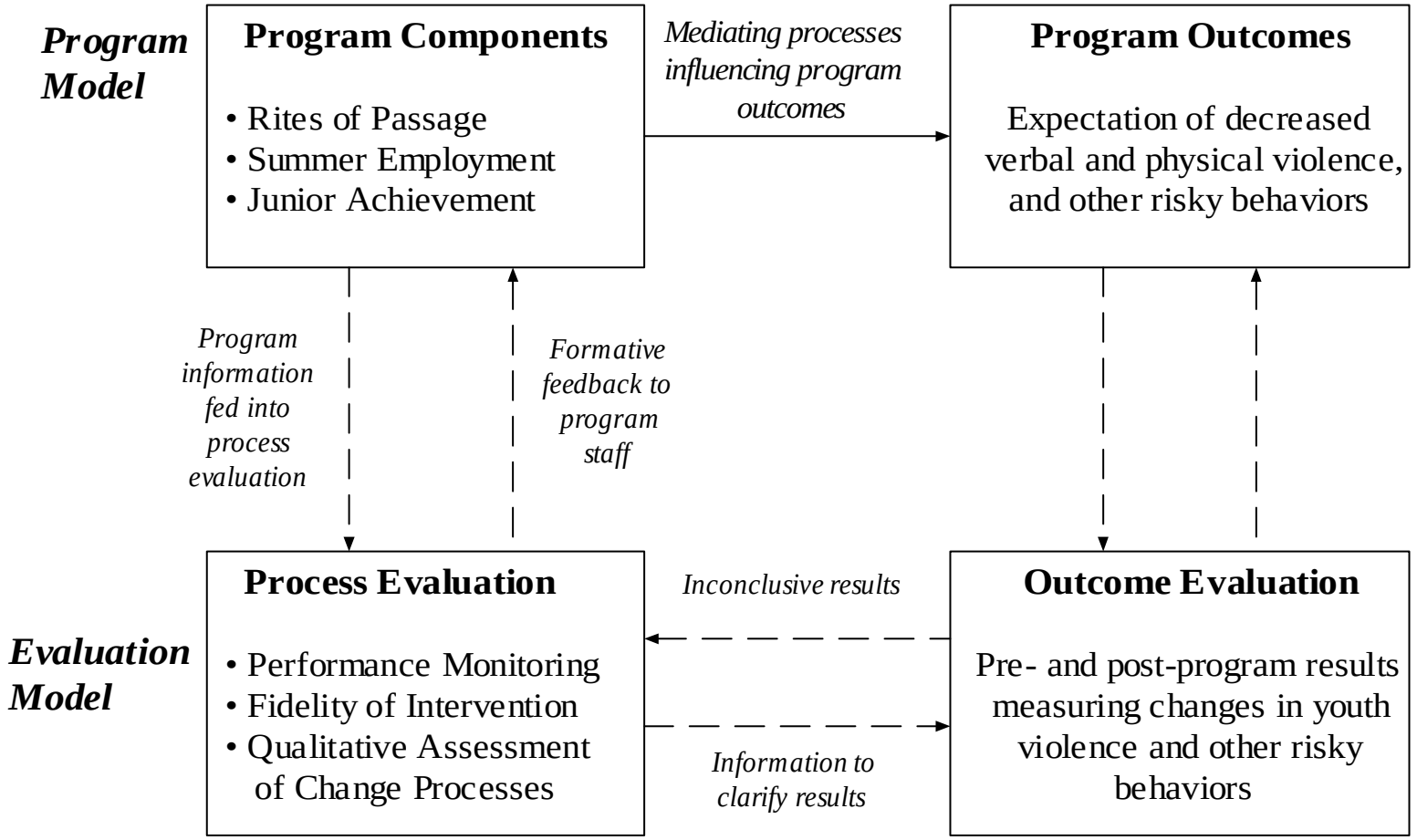
- How did the implementation of SAGE differ from its initial design, and what unanticipated circumstances accounted for these changes?
- Why did some youth gain a great deal from the program while others benefitted less? How did participants' opinions and expectations about the program change over the course of the program?
- What improvements could be made to strengthen the program?
- What are the crucial issues and barriers that communities might face when considering implementing a youth-oriented violence prevention program like SAGE?

The process evaluation provided essential program monitoring data that allowed regular assessment of implementation of the intervention activities and also provided ongoing feedback to the program staff.

As a framework for the process evaluation, a model was developed (Figure A.1) that depicted the various intervention components and elements to be monitored.

Figure A.1

Schematic Overview of SAGE Evaluation Components



SOURCES OF DATA

Multiple methods and sources were used in the data collection procedures (Figure A.2). The sources of data along with a summary of the types of information collected follow.

Mentoring/Rites of Passage

- Content of the sessions and materials used for the ROP
- Attendance at all ROP sessions and events, including field trips
- Initiate's reviews of each ROP session attended
- Contacts the parent facilitator made with the participants' parents
- Mentors' perception of their initiate's progress while participating in ROP
- Contact with youth who considered dropping out or actually dropped out of the program
- Feedback from mentors who attended the ROP mentor training
- Any contact mentor had with youth, including ROP
- Session facilitator's opinion of each ROP session
- Effects of participation on mentors as a result of ROP
- Degree of participation in ROP by parents
- Changes in communication between parents and youth in part as a result of ROP.

Summer Employment

The process data collection activities for the summer employment component of SAGE included similar types of information (e.g., implementation, dosage, and indirect effects) and used methods similar to those discussed previously. Examples of the types of information we gathered included:

- Attendance at all employment-related events
- Records for hours worked and job attendance
- Money earned by youth
- Supervisors' ratings of the youths' performance
- Problems or barriers youth faced while employed
- Youths' perceptions of the employment program
- Employers' opinion of SAGE and of employing SAGE youth.

Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement process data collection included attendance records and course materials covered. More qualitative tracking included the products generated and interviews with leaders about their perceptions of the successes and problems experienced.

Figure A.2

Data Collection Methods
Program Monitoring and Feedback

Participation Records	Attendance logs from **all** program activities, including ROP sessions, parent and mentor meetings, job orientation/training, JA meetings and records of income earned
Program Documentation	Copies of program materials, including mentor training materials, ROP manuals, job assignments and job descriptions, employer manual, and JA manual
Observation	Observation of ROP sessions, graduation, job orientation, and JA sessions
Tracking	Records of participants who drop out and documentation of efforts to retain their participation
Participant Evaluations	Evaluations completed by participants, such as initiate session evaluations

Figure A.2 (continued)

Data Collection Methods
Qualitative Assessment

Focus Groups	Pre- and post-program focus groups with youths and mentors
Interviews	Pre- and post-program interviews with employers, parents, and program staff
Evaluations	Employer evaluations of youths and counselors, and mentor monthly evaluations of youths

LIMITATIONS OF THE PROCESS EVALUATION

Incomplete data was the most significant problem faced throughout the process evaluation. Completion of forms and interviews was voluntary and relied on the good will and dedication of the staff and volunteers. Generally, program administrative data were complete, although some information—such as when changes were made in mentoring assisgnments—was not adequately tracked. Volunteers, in particular, often lacked a full appreciation of the data requests made of them and subsequently assigned the requests a lower priority in their already busy schedules.

Difficulties in data collection during the early stages of the project led to modification to make them more user friendly. These modifications, coupled with more extensive training for both staff and volunteers about the importance of the data to the project, as well as for securing future funds, resulted in increased responses. However, the number and completeness of the responses obtained remained less than desirable. Even the addition of incentives such as a weekly drawing for gift certificates for dinners did not yield the completeness of mentor data desired.

A second issue for the process evaluation data included the self-selection bias that occurred in those willing to respond. Focus group attendance, for example, was not mandatory. Youths were recruited through a small cash incentive ($10.00) and pizza. Mentors were recruited through similar means, with a $15.00 cash incentive. Although attendance was generally good at the focus groups, there was no attempt to assess systematically if the group was more likely to attract a certain type of participant and, more importantly, exclude others.

Other practical constraints limited the kinds of data collected. Efforts were made to avoid interrupting the program flow or imposing unnatural constraints. For example, while an African American male researcher observed some ROP sessions and attended some field activities, there was no attempt to comprehensively monitor all ROP activities in order for them to be as natural as possible and to avoid interruptions.

PROCESS EVALUATION RESULTS

This section describes the SAGE intervention as it was implemented, and it details the results and findings of the process evaluation component.

Rites of Passage

Eighty-six youth were randomly assigned to the ROP program. Cohort 1 of ROP was implemented between January 9, 1994, and August 14, 1994, while Cohort 2 was administered between November 6, 1994, and June 4, 1995. However, activities involving planning (such as training mentors) began several months before those starting dates.

Youths and their parent(s) were notified via mail that they had been selected to participate in the ROP program. Parents and youths were invited to attend an initial orientation session to learn about the program and ask questions. This session served as a kickoff for a series of 14 biweekly sessions held on Sunday afternoons, with the exception of holidays. ROP sessions were approximately 2 hours in length. With the exception of field trips, the camping trip, and the final graduation ceremony, all ROP sessions were held at the Hayti Heritage Center in downtown Durham. This building is a natural convening center for African Americans; it is conveniently located and houses an African American cultural center as well as the offices of the Durham Business and Professional Chain, which sponsored the ROP program.

Each youth was assigned an African American adult male mentor. The specifics of mentoring are discussed in greater depth later in this report.

Each of the 14 sessions focused on a specific topic, with an overall emphasis on infusing into that theme African American customs and values, known as *Nguzo Saba*. While Cohorts 1 and 2 were exposed to the same topics, the sessions were presented in a different order. Table A.1 details the session topics in their order by cohort.

Table A.1. Variety and Order of ROP Sessions, by Cohort

Cohort 1: Jan 1994-Aug 1994	Cohort 2: Nov 1994-June 1995
African American History (4 sessions)	Studying and Test-Taking Skills
Studying and Test-Taking Skills	African American History (4 sessions)
Decision Making & Problem Solving	Urban Survival
Developing Good Mental Health	Decision Making & Problem Solving
Demystifying Science & Mathematics	Developing Good Mental Health
Conflict Resolution Without Violence	Demystifying Science & Mathematics
Substance Abuse	Substance Abuse
Economics	Conflict Resolution Without Violence
Entrepreneurship	Economics
Sexuality	Entrepreneurship
Urban Survival	Sexuality

Each session was conducted by an African American individual who was knowledgeable in the particular subject. For instance, entrepreneurship was conducted by several mentors who were involved with the historically African American-owned North Carolina Mutual Life Company. Sexuality was presented by an African American male health educator in the Durham Health Department. Sessions included both didactic and interactive techniques, so that youth could be active participants in the learning process. Four facilitators oversaw each session.

Youth were also required to write a book report and to complete a community service requirement for graduation. Approximately one-half of the youth completed the community service requirement at the local rescue mission, police department, or soup kitchen on a day set aside for service activities. Several of the mentors also participated and supervised the

community service requirement. Youth who did not attend the day for service activities, completed the requirement by helping out at the camping trip (a more detailed description follows).

In addition to specific ROP sessions, youth were also invited to attend day-long field trips: Both cohorts visited the local courthouse in Durham, the Museum of Life and Science in Durham, and an African American-owned business in Greensboro. Each cohort also went on a weekend field trip out of town to learn about civil rights and African American history. Cohort 1 spent its weekend field trip in Washington, DC, visiting sites such as the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial, while Cohort 2 visited Atlanta, Georgia, to see local historically African American colleges and The King Center (the final resting place of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.).

Just before graduation, youth were required to attend a weekend camping trip. The Cohort 1 camping trip took place July 22-24, 1994, at Camp New Hope in Chapel Hill, NC; the Cohort 2 camping trip took place May 19-21, 1995, at Cardinal Park in Pine Bluff, NC. The Cohort 2 camping trip was held at the same time as the National African American Storyteller's Retreat, which provided an ideal cultural setting for the "ritualized" aspects of the camping trip. The initiates, mentors, and facilitators arrived on Friday evening and set up camp. The weekend's activities included workshops on orienteering, leadership, map reading, and first aid. Values clarification discussions (e.g., *Nguzo Saba*) were integrated throughout most of the sessions. Other activities that took place included a manhood profile, activities promoting group unity, interviews with elders to determine youths' readiness for assuming manhood, and finally a manhood ritual. At both camping trips, there was a heavy focus on military-style discipline so that initiates were required to move through sessions in a coordinated and orderly manner. Mentors and facilitators with military experience, dressed in fatigues, disciplined youth who did not follow the standards of conduct (by talking inappropriately, having attitude problems, arguing, being tardy for activities, etc.) through physical exercise (primarily pushups). The weekend culminated with a private African American manhood ritual.

The graduation ceremony for each cohort was held in the auditorium of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company in downtown Durham. The graduation ceremony was held on a Sunday afternoon, including youth, their parent(s), and their mentor, and lasted approximately 2½ hours. A feast followed. The ceremony involved the presentation of the initiates, the conferring of manhood and ancestral names on the youth, and an opportunity for each youth to describe his ROP experience to the audience for 2 minutes, after which the community responded to each youth with respect and encouragement. A traditional African celebration dance was performed at the closing of the graduation ceremony. Following the ceremony, all participants and community members were invited for a buffet dinner.

Youth Attendance. Forty-one youths were randomly assigned to the ROP condition in Cohort 1, and 45 were randomly assigned in Cohort 2. Graduation rates were 24 (58%) and 29 (64%) of the total number of youth who were randomly assigned. Seven randomly assigned youth (8.1%) never participated in ROP, and 26 youth (30.2%) dropped out of the program after having completed at least one session. Table A.2 provides specific information on numbers of participating youths and their degree of participation.

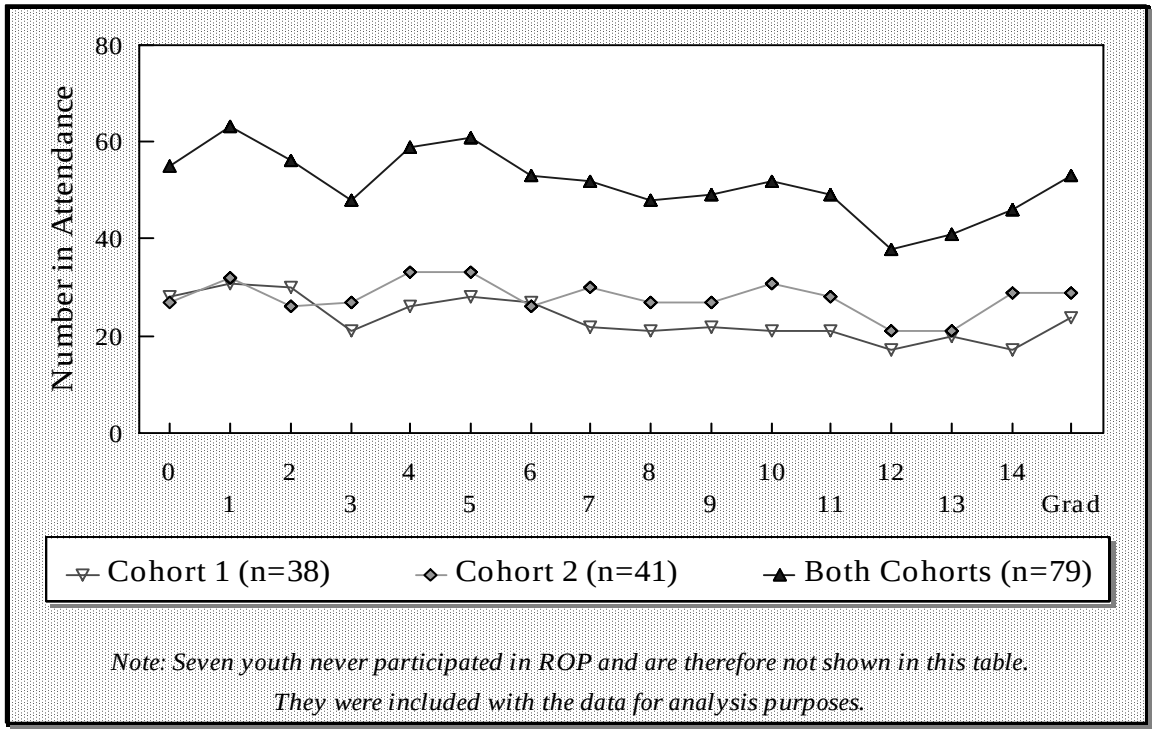
Table A.2. Outcomes of Rites of Passage Program: Summary

Number & Percentage of Rites of Passage Youth	Overall	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Youth never attending any ROP session	7 (8.1 %)	3 (7.3 %)	4 (8.9%)
Youth dropping out after attending at least 1 session	26 (30.2 %)	14 (34.1 %)	12 (26.7 %)
Youth graduating from ROP	53 (61.6 %)	24 (58.5 %)	29 (64.4 %)
Total youth randomly assigned to ROP	86 (100.0 %)	41 (100.0 %)	45 (100.0 %)

Youth could have attended a total of 14 individual sessions, not including the orientation or graduation ceremony. Youth who graduated from ROP attended an average of 11.2 sessions, with a range of 6 to 14 sessions. Five of the graduating youth attended all sessions.

Youth attendance varied gradually over time at ROP sessions. Attendance at the first few sessions was typically high, with greater variation thereafter. This is not surprising because two thirds of the youths who eventually dropped out did so after one to four sessions. Figure A.3 illustrates youth attendance over time.

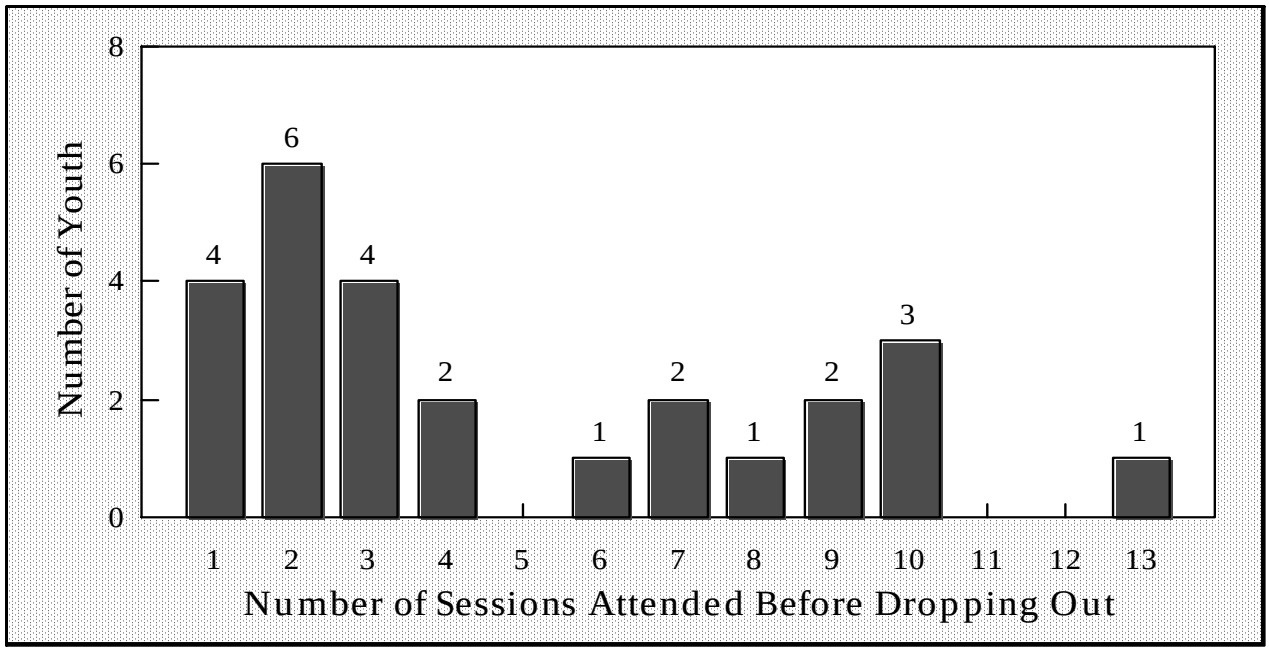
Figure A.3. Attendance Over Time for Rites of Passage Youth



Note: Seven youth never participated in ROP and are therefore not shown in this table. They were included with the data for analysis purposes.

Youth Not Completing ROP. Overall, 33 (38%) of the 86 youths randomly assigned to either cohort of the ROP program did not complete the program. Seven youths (8.1%) never attended an ROP session, and 26 youths (30.2%) dropped out. In Cohort 1, 17 (41.5%) of the assigned youth did not graduate from ROP; of those, 3 youth never attended an ROP session, and 14 dropped out after having attended at least one session. In Cohort 2, 16 (35.5%) of the assigned youth did not graduate from the program, of whom 4 never participated in an ROP session and 12 dropped out. Overall, youth attended an average of 4.6 sessions before dropping out; however, there is a bimodal distribution with almost two thirds (16) of youth dropouts attending 1 through 4 sessions (mean = 2.5) and the remaining one third of youths (10) dropping out after 6 through 13 sessions (mean = 8.9). This distribution is presented in Figure A.4. Despite the fact that youth dropped out, they were retained in the sample for analysis purposes. More detail on this is provided in the outcome analysis section.

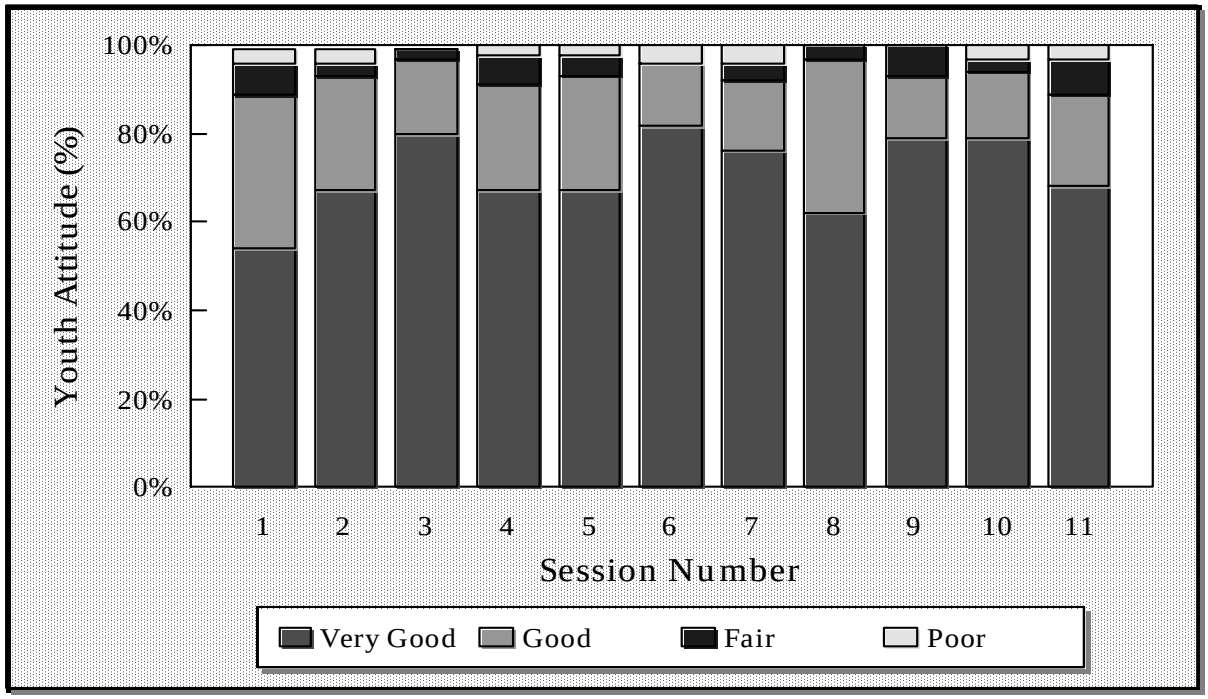
Figure A.4. Distribution



Youth Attitudes Toward Rites of Passage. Youth who attended the ROP sessions were asked, at the completion of each session, to evaluate the session anonymously. Youth were asked what they thought about the day's ROP session, activities, and discussion. They were also asked to evaluate the ROP program so far. Response categories included poor, fair, good, and very good.

Youth tended to be very positive about the ROP program, as indicated by their self-reported perceptions of the program. Throughout the course of the program, nearly all youth responded that they found ROP so far to be “very good” or “good.” Figure A.5 illustrates youth perceptions aggregated across both cohorts. While the majority of students responded “good” or “very good” throughout the program, there were some slight variations over time. For example, “good” was relatively high as compared to “very good” in the first session.

Figure A.5. Youth Attitudes Toward ROP Over Time



ROP Mentor Attendance. ROP youths were paired with adult African American males to serve as their mentors for the duration of the ROP program. Mentors were recruited through a variety of media, including public service announcements, church bulletins, and word of mouth. Anecdotal data suggest that many of the mentors serving in Cohort 1 had previously been mentors during prior years of the ROP program. Approximately seven men volunteered as ROP mentors during both cohorts.

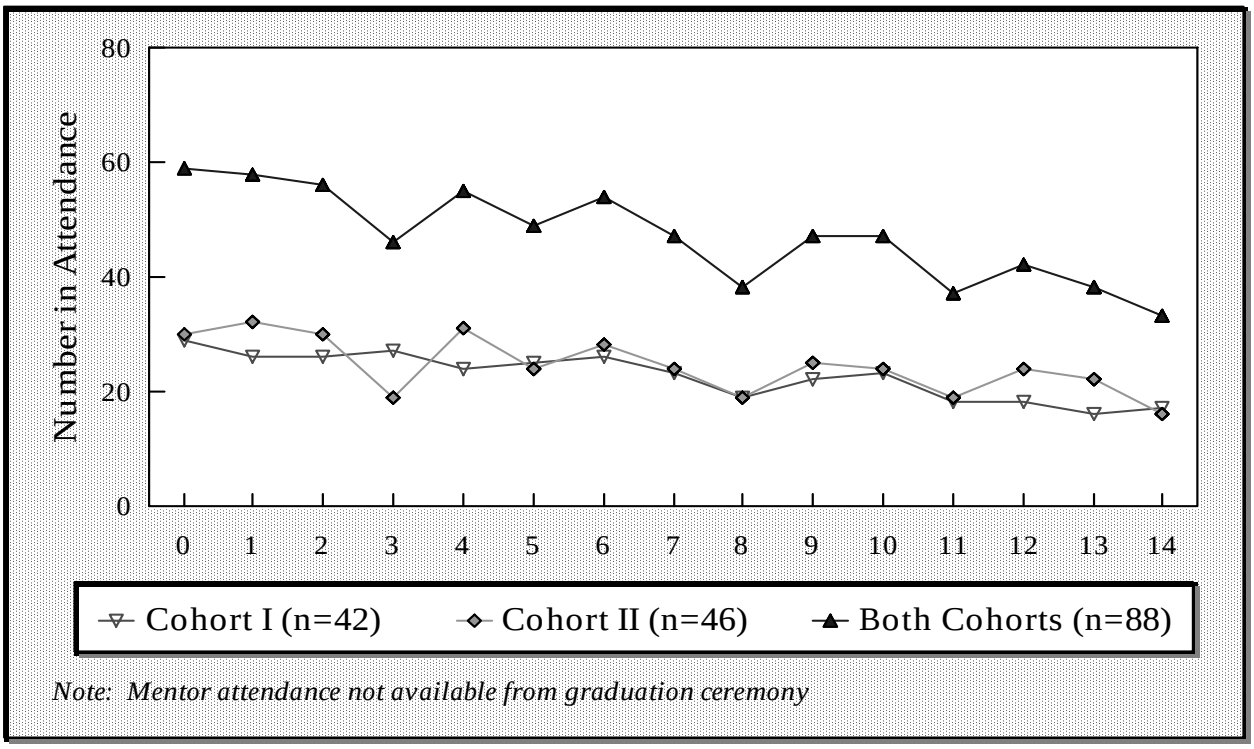
Although no specific data were collected on mentor age, observational data suggest that mentors ranged in age from immediately post-college (22 or 23) to older, retired individuals (about 65). In Cohort 2, data were collected on the number of mentors in the program who were also the fathers of initiates; there were six such pairs.

Mentor Attendance. Eighty-eight adult African American males were initially recruited to serve as mentors to ROP youth during the SAGE intervention: 42 in Cohort 1 and 46 in Cohort 2. Mentors who had not previously worked with youth in ROP settings were encouraged (although not explicitly required) to attend mentor trainings. These training sessions were held on a Saturday prior to the beginning of the ROP program of each cohort. They reviewed issues such as expectations of mentors in the ROP program, and how to relate to teenagers and their parents. Overall, 38 mentors (43.2% of all mentors) attended the ROP mentor training.

Mentors were asked to attend ROP sessions along with the youth with whom they were paired. Mentor attendance was collected via sign-in sheets during ROP sessions. Mentor

attendance fluctuated over time, but similar to youth attendance over time, there was a gradual decrease in attendance. Mentor attendance over time is displayed in Figure A.6.

Figure A.6. Mentor Attendance Over Time



Mentor attendance was difficult to track because this information was generally not collected for non-ROP session activities, such as field trips, and because of their high rate of turnover. Especially during the first few months of the ROP program, mentors dropped out of the program (and often were added). Dropping out was attributed to the amount of time that was required of them, their lack of interest, and the apathy of the youth they served. Qualitative data suggest that mentors felt that the ROP program was more time-consuming than they had initially anticipated, and that they were not provided with sufficient information about how to deal with uninterested youth and parents.

Initially in each cohort, mentors and youths were paired on a one-to-one basis. Mentor turnover made tracking mentor-youth pairs a particularly challenging endeavor. Pairing youth and mentors was difficult due to both mentor and youth attrition.

When mentor attrition occurred, program staff reacted quickly to locate another adult male to serve as a mentor. In most cases, mentors who had served in previous ROP sessions were selected to replace a "dropped" mentor. In a few cases, one mentor was assigned two youth. However, responses were sometimes creative: In one case, when a youth's mentor dropped out late in the program, members of the program staff (an ROP session facilitator and a case manager) stepped in to serve as the youth's mentor.

Youth-Mentor Relationships. Mentors and youths were encouraged to interact both within and outside of ROP meetings. Mentors and initiates engaged in a wide variety of activities, including attending ROP together, tutoring, going shopping, seeing a movie, playing sports, doing community service, eating meals, going to church, attending recitals, and visiting the youth's family. Mentors were asked to record their activities with the youth to whom they were assigned, and these results are reported.

In Cohort 1, results were recorded on individual forms handed out by the program coordinator at the end of a session. This system proved problematic in that many activities between mentors and youths were not accurately reported. Indeed, many forms were incomplete or not filled out at all. As a result, the number of activities reported in Cohort 1 was low. Feedback from discussions with program staff and focus groups with mentors demonstrated a need to make the forms easier to use. The instrument developed for Cohort 2 was a bound log, designed so that mentors could record their interactions with youth at their leisure. It also included a calendar of the month in question, which improved recall about the dates that activities were performed. This new instrument helped tremendously in obtaining more accurate data. At the beginning of Cohort 2, activity sheets were being turned in at a rate of nearly 85% of youth; however, several months later rates tapered off and were closer to 40%. RTI recognized the lack of completed forms and began offering a drawing for $40 gift certificates to mentors who completed their mentor logs. Despite this tactic, rates of turning in mentor logs remained low (about 40%) for the remainder of the Cohort 2 ROP program.

Because of the wide differences in how data on activities were collected, comparisons between cohorts are not valid. Furthermore, the lack of complete and accurate data rendered its value for outcome evaluation analysis useless.

For analysis purposes, activities were divided between those that were ROP-related, and activities that took place outside the ROP program. This latter form of activity was particularly interesting, because it demonstrated commitment beyond the "required" ROP sessions. "Bonding" sessions were liberal in their inclusion and ranged from a possibly low-bonding telephone call to a potentially greater bonding activity, such playing sports together.

In Cohort 1, nine youths had no logs turned in for them, and five youths had logs turned in with 0 "bonding" activities reported (i.e., the mentor reported they had only attended ROP sessions together). Most youths had between one and 10 bonding activities reported for them during the entire ROP program.

In Cohort 2, eight youths had no activity log turned in for them, and one youth had a log turned in with 0 bonding activities reported. Most mentors reported having 16+ bonding activities with their assigned youth. For this cohort, the average number of activities per youth who had at least one activity log turned in for him was 29.2%. Nearly three quarters (72.5%) of all activities reported on the activity logs were bonding sessions; however, nearly 40% of the above figure consisted only of telephone calls. Figures A.7 and A.8 display the range of activities reported for the youth.

Figure A.7. Bonding Sessions in Cohort 1

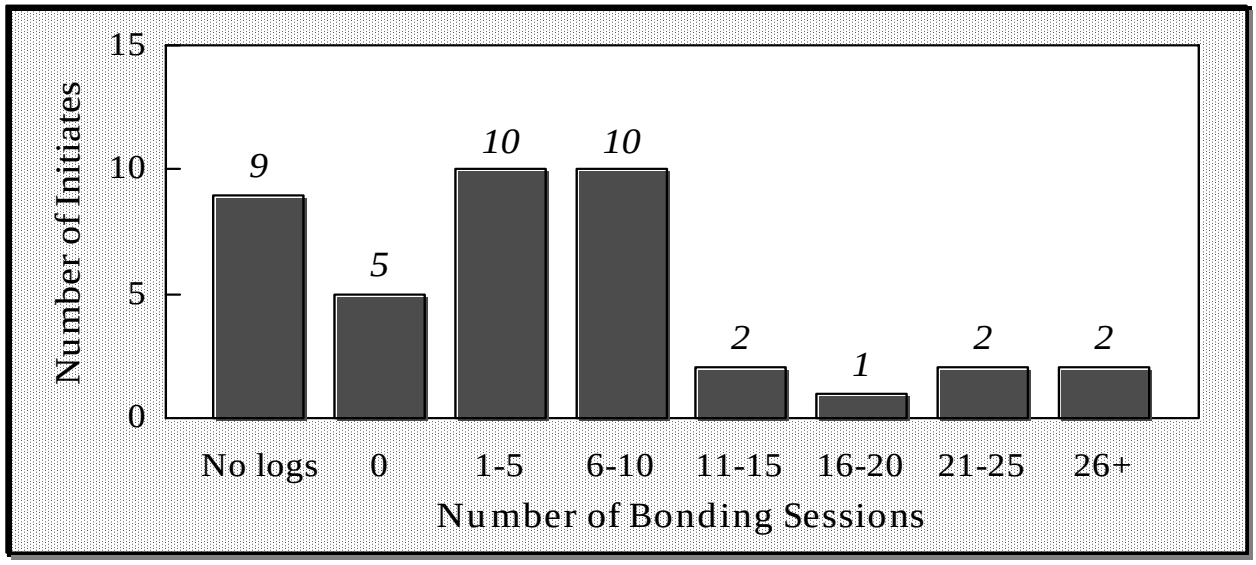


Figure A.8. Bonding Sessions in Cohort 2

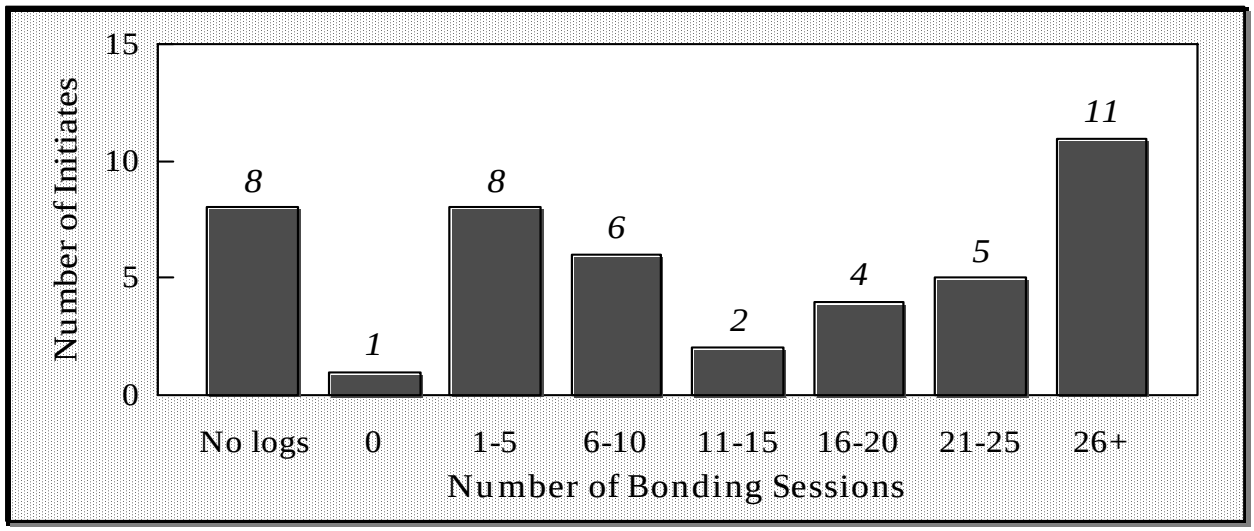
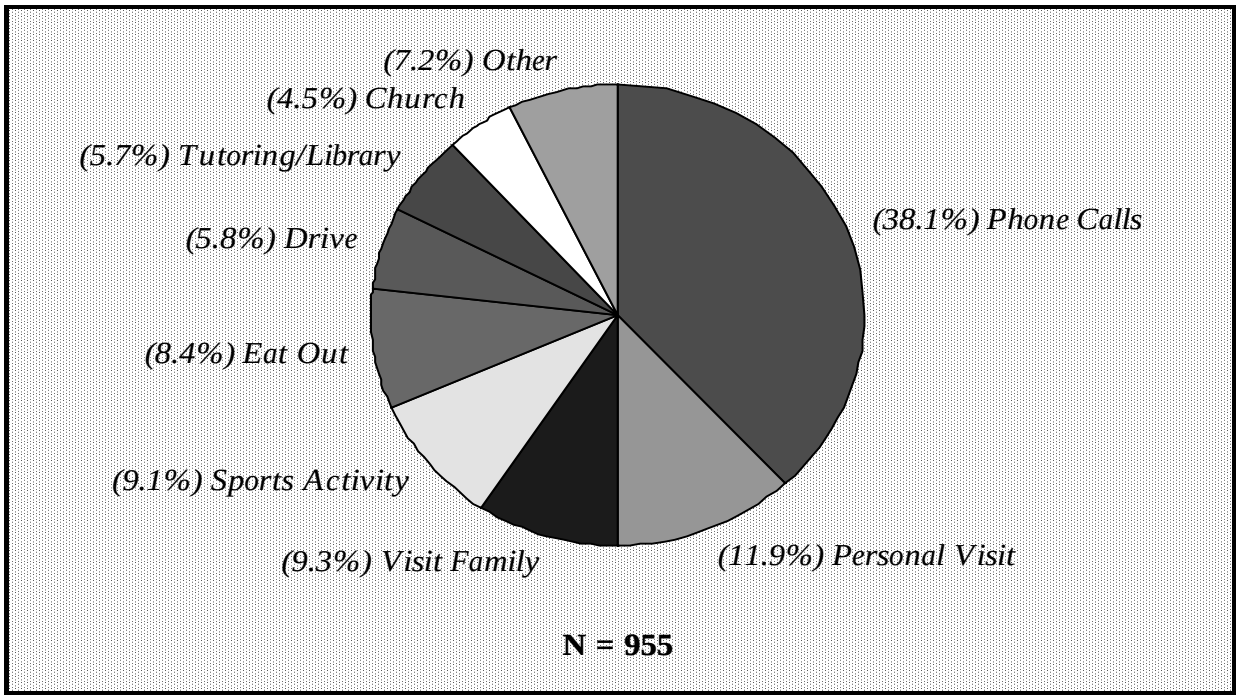


Figure A.9 further demonstrates the types of bonding activities reported by the mentors. These data are only reported for Cohort 2, since the data from Cohort 1 did not capture this level of detail. The pie chart illustrates that 38.1% of all non-ROP activities were telephone calls, 11.9% were personal visits with the youth, 9.3% involved visiting the youth's family, 9.1% involved playing sports, and 8.4% involved eating together. The remaining one quarter of the activities included taking a drive together, tutoring, attending church, or other activities.

Figure A.9. Types of Bonding Sessions Reported (Cohort 2 only)



Although data collection on mentor-youth activities terminated at graduation from the ROP program, qualitative data from focus groups and interviews suggest that some mentors did continue their relationship with the youth even after the ROP program was completed.

Rites of Passage Parent Meetings. Parent meetings were held once a month (one average) to complement the topics that the ROP youth were addressing. A single volunteer parent facilitator led presentations at the meetings and moderated discussion afterwards for each cohort. Observational data suggest that parent groups tended to be composed of women—the mothers of the ROP youth—and that the parent groups were not well attended, in comparison with attendance of ROP youth at the same session.

Attendance data are presented in Figure A.10. These data suggest that attendance at ROP parent meetings appeared to be a function of the topic covered on a given date. Topics by session number within the cohort are provided in Table A.3. Qualitative data from interviews with parents indicate that some parents felt that the topics could be improved and that some of the topics (such as "Voting") were more geared to people in specific socioeconomic strata, whereas more general topics such as "How to Relate to Your Teenager" would have been more applicable to all parents attending.

One activity that the parent group did perform together during the second cohort was to create a quilt with one square dedicated to each youth involved in the program. The quilt was presented to the Durham Business and Professional Chain by the initiates' mothers, in honor of the initiates, at the ROP graduation ceremony.

Figure A.10. Parent Attendance Over Time

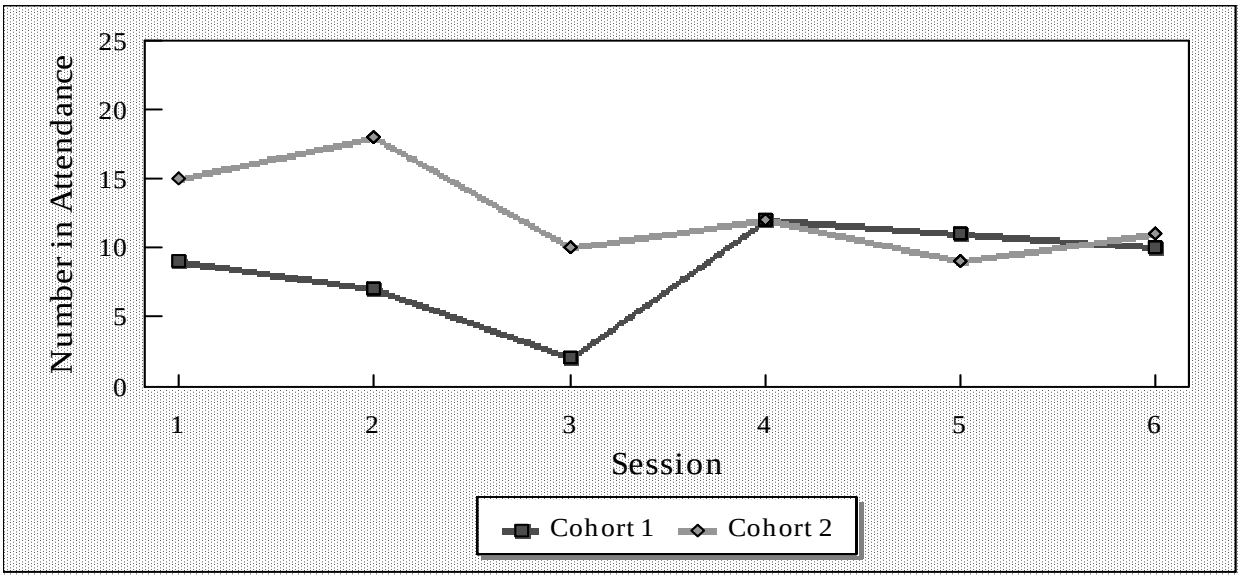


Table A.3. Themes of Parent Sessions

Session #	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
1	Purpose of ROP	Purpose of ROP
2	Communication Skills	Education and Reading
3	Sexuality	Home Finances
4	Health	Health
5	Substance Abuse	Importance of Voting
6	Preparation for Graduation	How to Deal with Problems with Your Teenager

Summer Jobs Training and Placement (JTP)

The 6-week jobs training and placement (JTP) component was conducted over the summer. For Cohort 1, it was conducted during ROP (June 20, 1994, to July 29, 1994); for Cohort 2, it naturally followed the ROP program (June 19, 1995, to July 28, 1995). Youths attended a half-day employment training workshop conducted in downtown Durham just prior to beginning their jobs. Not all of the youths who were to work during the summer were in attendance, but the counselors were made aware that they needed to work with those youths on a one-on-one basis. Youths' interests in different activities was assessed so that youths could be matched with jobs that they found enjoyable. In addition, youths were asked to take a test to assess their abilities in math and reading. Several youths who subsequently received poor scores

were also assigned to attend enrichment classes (for which they would be paid), and work only part-time at their summer job.

Three jobs counselors helped to find jobs for the youths, arranged transportation and meals when necessary, and intervened when incidents occurred on the job (youth not showing up or misbehaving on the job). The counselors were the same for both cohorts, except that one of the counselors left during the second JTP cohort. This counselor was immediately replaced, without much apparent disturbance to the JTP program.

Cohort 2 was different from Cohort 1 in that an "end of the summer" picnic was held at the end of the JTP program at the Lyons Park in Durham. All employed youth and parents were invited to attend, and the Mayor of Durham was in attendance. SAGE tee-shirts were distributed, and drawings were held for various back-to-school items including bookbags and other school supplies.

Youths worked at a variety of jobs, although the majority worked in clerical or administrative positions. The Museum of Life and Science also accepted assistants as young as 14 years old, so many youths were placed there. Recreation, retail sales, and skill-specific employers rounded out the remainder of the variety of places that SAGE youth worked. Table A.4 provides an overview of SAGE youth employers.

Table A.4. Employers of SAGE Youth

Administrative	Recreation	Retail Sales	Skill-Specific	Assistants
• SAGE Office • Dentist's Office • Financial Agency • Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Project • North Carolina Central University: Library & Administration	• Patterson Recreation Ctr • YMCA • Youth Sports Program • Durham Bulls Athletics	• Clothing Store • Flower Shop • Movie Theater • Bookstore	• Ceramic Painting • Automotive Repair	• Museum of Life and Science

Hours Worked by Youths. A total of 170 youths were randomized to take part in the summer JTP component. Of these youths, 86 had been assigned to ROP and 84 had been assigned to JTP only. However, because 23 ROP youths did not graduate or attend the last four regular sessions of ROP (which was required to be eligible for JTP[1]), 61 youths from ROP participated, resulting in a total of 145 youth *ever* participating in JTP (Table A.5).

[1] One ROP youth who was not deemed to be eligible to work, did work 50.0 hours. He had attended a total of three ROP sessions, and had not attended any of the final eight ROP sessions. This youth has been excluded from the analysis above.

Table A.5. ROP Youth Eligible for JTP

	RITES OF PASSAGE		
	Cohort 1	**Cohort 2**	**Overall**
Randomly Assigned to ROP	41	45	86
Eligible for JTP	28 (68.3%)	33 (73.3%)	61 (70.9%)

Just over 90% (55) of all eligible ROP youths and 76.2% (64) of randomly assigned JTP-only youths actually worked at least one hour. Consequently, 17.9% (26) of all eligible youths never participated in the JTP-only component of SAGE (Table A.6).

Table A.6. Participation of Eligible JTP Youth

	RITES OF PASSAGE			JTP ONLY			OVERALL
	Cohort 1	**Cohort 2**	**Overall**	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**	**Overall**	
Eligible for JTP[a]	28	33	61	41	43	84	145
Worked at Least 1 Hour	26 (92.9%)	29 (87.9%)	55 (90.2%)	29 (70.7%)	35 (81.4%)	64 (76.2%)	119 (82.1%)

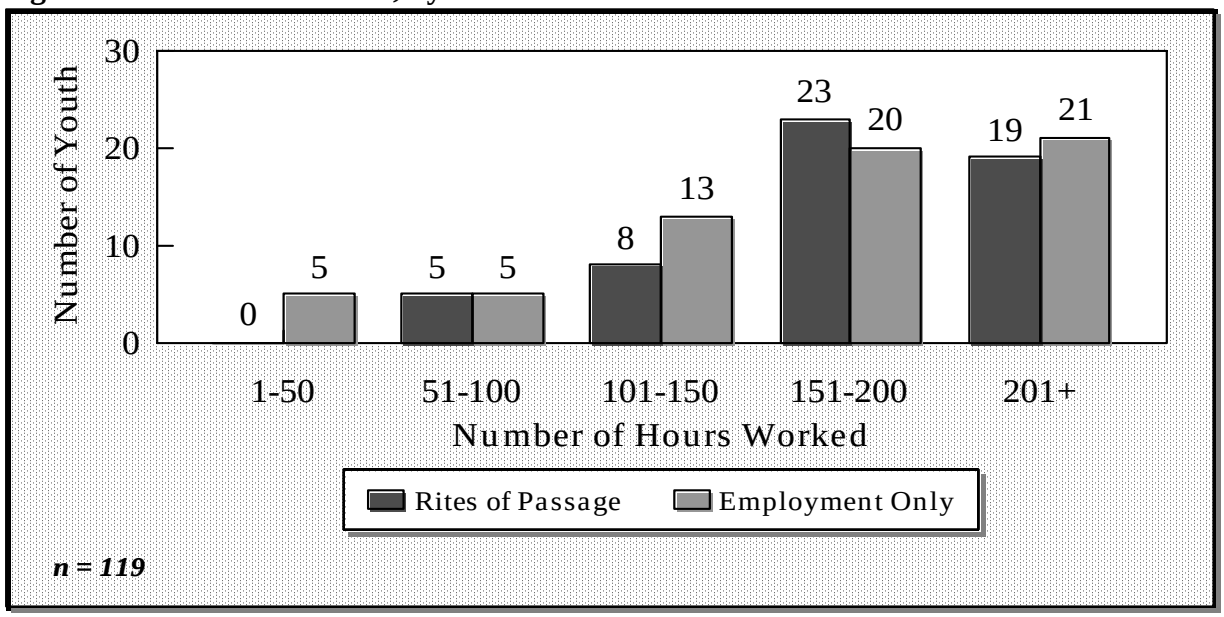
[a]All youth randomly assigned to the JTP condition were included as "eligible."

A cutoff of working at least 1 hour was established as a criterion for inclusion in the analysis. Of the 119 youths who worked at least 1 hour, they averaged 165.7 hours over the summer, on a range from 13 to 294. Comparing youths by condition, ROP youths averaged 173.7 hours per worker, compared to 160.4 hours for employment-only youths. This difference is not statistically significant in a *t*-test ($p = 0.189$). Figure A.11 displays the variation of hours worked by condition and by cohort.

Junior Achievement

The entrepreneurship component followed the JA model. Cohorts 1 and 2 were treated differently with respect to Junior Achievement. Like the ROP program, JA was implemented by the Durham Business and Professional Chain. Also similar to the ROP program, JA meetings were generally held at the Hayti Heritage Center. In Cohort 1, youths were split into two groups, whereas youths were kept in one group in Cohort 2. Each cohort had to develop an idea for a product, recruit

Figure A.11. Hours Worked, by SAGE Condition



investors, market and sell the product they had developed, and return money to the investors and pay themselves. This process was intended to take 12 weeks, but in some cases it took longer.

In Cohort 1, youths were split into two different JA sessions because of the large number of youths to be served. One group consisted of youths participating in ROP, which met on Tuesday evenings, whereas the second group consisted of youths participating in JTP, which met on Thursday evenings. The two groups had an "all group" meeting on a Saturday to culminate the JA sessions. The ROP group in Cohort 1 officially began meeting on September 6, 1994, and ended on January 14, 1995. The JTP group in Cohort 1 officially began meeting on October 6, 1994, and also ended on January 14, 1995. While JA was designed to be a 12-week program, some adaptations were made to accommodate family vacations during the holiday season. The product that was designed and sold for each of the groups was tee-shirts and sweatshirts bearing an original design. Both JA groups in Cohort 1 were successful in making small profits for their investors and for themselves.

In Cohort 2, youths were collapsed into one JA session because it was determined after Cohort 1 that only a small number of youths would attend the JA component. The combined group of ROP/JTP youth met once a week beginning September 5, 1995, and ending December 19, 1995. The product that was sold during this JA session was also sweatshirts and tee-shirts with an original design. This JA group was also successful in making a small profit for their investors and for themselves.

Youth Attendance. Overall, only 36 youths in Cohort 1 and 32 youths in Cohort 2 ever attended a JA session. In Cohort 1, more ROP youths participated than JTP youths, both ever (21 ROP youths versus 15 JTP youths) and by session. In Cohort 2, an opposite trend occurred: more JTP youths participated in JA than ROP youths, again both ever (21 JTP youths versus 11 ROP youths) and by session. One potential explanation for this difference is the grouping of the

youths in each cohort: Because we split Cohort 1 youths into two groups, ROP youths in Cohort 1 may have seen this component as more of an extension of ROP than those youths who participated along with JTP youths in Cohort 2. JA Attendance by cohort over time is illustrated in Figures A.12 and A.13.

Figure A.12. Junior Achievement Attendance Over Time: Cohort 1

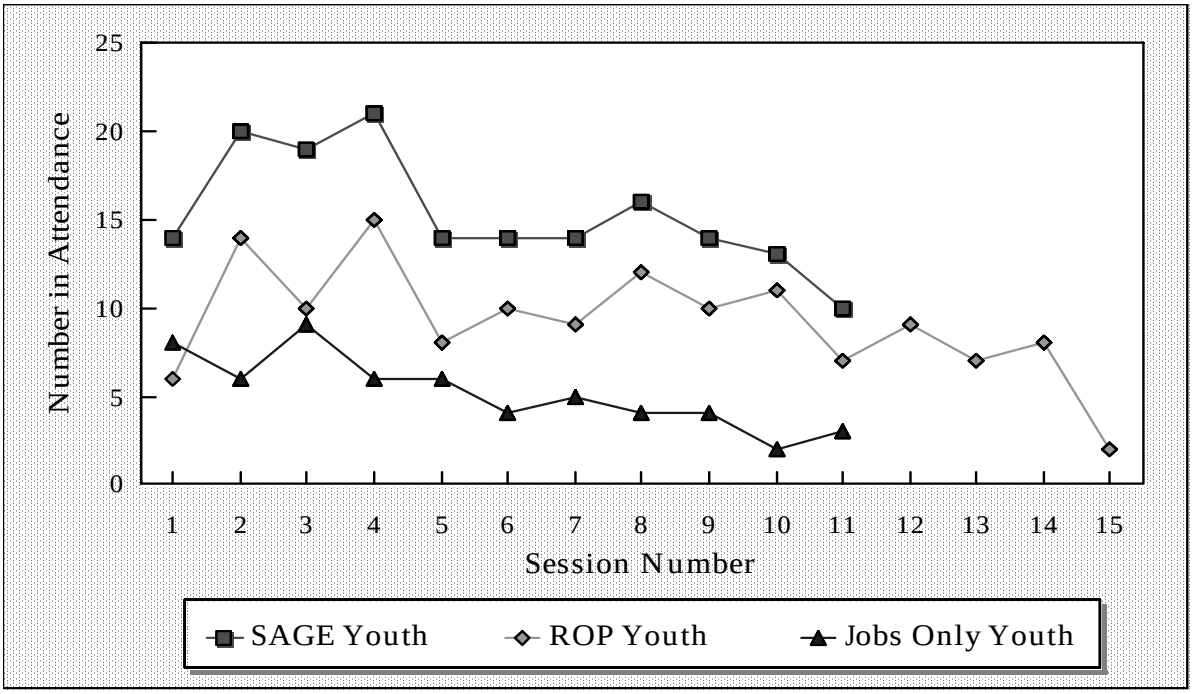
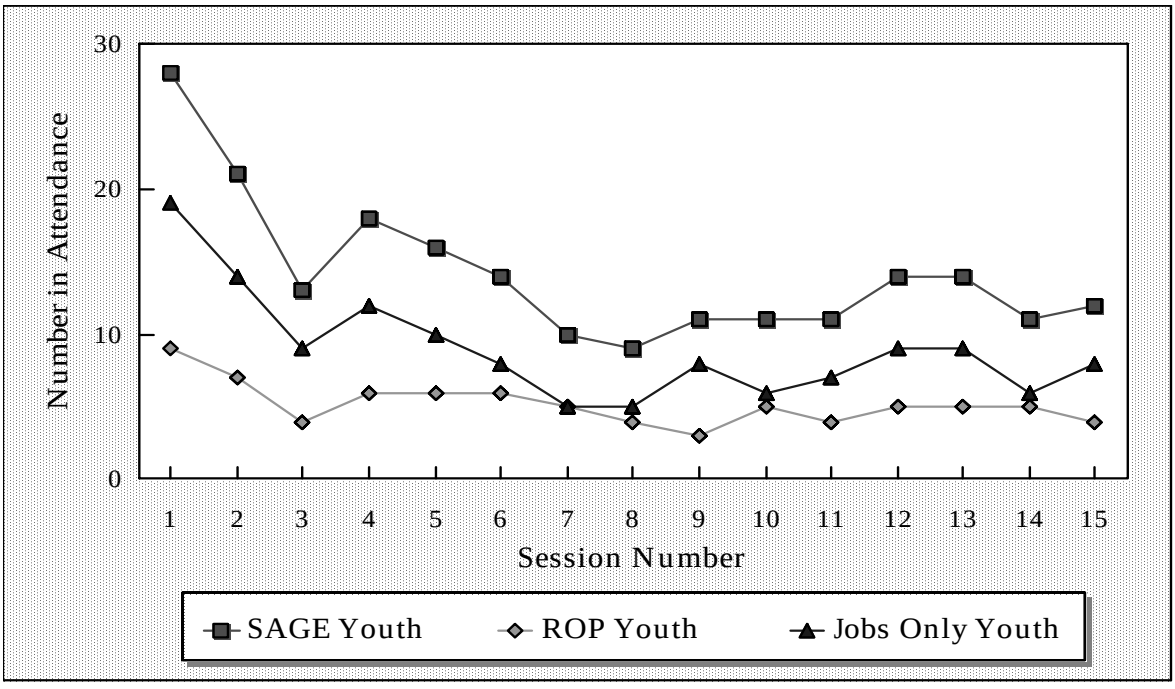


Figure A.13. Junior Achievement Attendance Over Time: Cohort 2

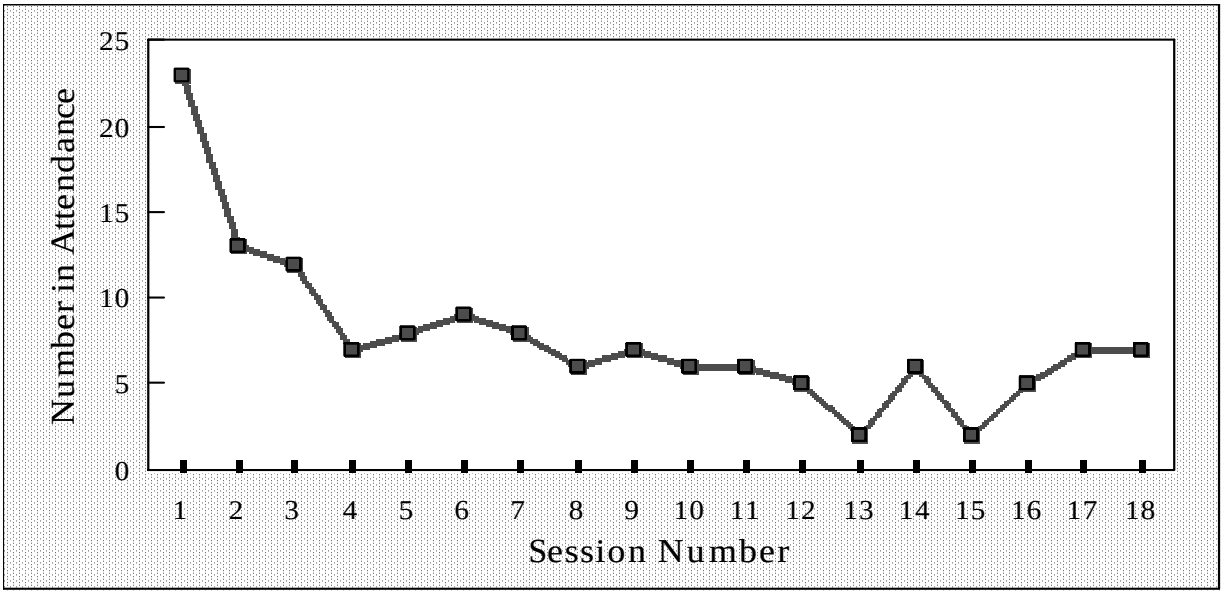


Delayed Program

A delayed program was offered to the SAGE youths randomly assigned to this condition. The delayed program was designed to be similar to the JA program. It began June 17, 1996, and lasted for a period of 12 weeks. Youths sold tee-shirts and sweatshirts with an original design and did make a small profit, which was shared among all actively participating youths.

Attendance in the delayed program was extremely low: Of the 87 youths invited to attend the delayed SAGE program, no more than 23 (26.4 %) ever displayed interest in the program by attending a session (Figure A.14). Only eight youths (9.2 % of all invited youths) composed the core group of active participants. It is hypothesized that most youths did not participate in this program because they had passed the age when they might be interested in such programs.

Figure A.14. Attendance Over Time for Delayed Program



CONCLUSIONS FROM PROCESS EVALUATION

We discuss the results of the qualitative component[2] of the process evaluation by addressing the five research questions.

1. How did the implementation of SAGE differ from the conceptual program model, and what unanticipated circumstances accounted for these changes?

[2] These data represent a compilation of results from focus groups and interviews, as described previously. Because of the nature of the data collection methodologies, it is only possible to describe general themes—specific frequencies and numbers are not appropriate for this level of qualitative analysis.

Program-level attendance data suggest that each of the programs was generally implemented according to the SAGE model. For the ROP program, attendance data suggest that youths were exposed to the ROP sessions. Difficulties in initial recruitment and attendance for the first cohort resulted in modifying the program model to include a case manager, which appeared to improve recruitment and retention. Feedback for the ROP sessions suggested the curriculum was generally well received by the initiates. Although the reported mentor/initiate bonding numbers were less than optimal, results from focus groups and interviews suggest that the mentors underreported their contacts with the youths. Mentor feedback was used to modify the forms from Cohort 1 to 2 to make them more usable; however, reporting was still considered to underestimate the number of bonding sessions for Cohort 2. The parent group curriculum was generally implemented as developed, although attendance was less than desirable; however, this number was in line with what was anticipated in light of the extensive time demands parents/guardians already faced. In general, the ROP program was considered well implemented and its implementation was relatively close to the program model.

Similarly, program records for the JTP component suggest that this component was well implemented and well attended. A variety of jobs was available at appropriate skill levels for the youths.

JA attendance was less than desired, possibly because the program was conducted at the beginning of the school year, immediately following the youths' participation in the JTP.

2. What caused the unanticipated deviations from the program model?

One aspect in which the program differed from the model resulted from turnover among the ROP mentors and initiates. The model's premise was that a close mentoring relationship would develop between the initiate and his mentor and that the youth would attend the regularly scheduled ROP sessions. Although focus group and interview data suggest youths were generally satisfied with the ROP programs and their mentors, in-depth exploration of several issues helps to explain the ways the implementation of the ROP component differed from the model.

For some youths, the mentoring relationship was breached by mentor turnover. Occasionally, turnover was created by life changes, such as the mentor moving to another town, which did not appear to negatively impact the youth. Other causes, however, are considered to be more endemic to the model and suggest areas that need to be addressed for future implementations. For instance, focus group results reveal that mentors' perceptions about their roles may have been unrealistic and somewhat naive. Mentors report approaching their roles "expecting to make a difference" for the youth and imagined a warm, nurturing, and mutually satisfying relationship. However, in a number of cases, the mentors reported their relationships with the youth to be surprisingly frustrating and less than rewarding because of the youth's lack of interest or motivation, sometimes coupled with acting-out behaviors. From the youth initiates' perspective, focus group data suggest the youth sometimes felt mismatched with their mentors, perceiving them, for instance, as stodgy or boring.

This problematic relationship between some youth and their mentors explains at least some of the dropouts of mentors and initiates, although the exact impact of this factor is unknown. Because no definition had been developed to describe mentor "dropout," program staff found it difficult to classify when a mentor was no longer part of the program. Rather than mentors formally expressing a desire to terminate their involvement in the program, dropping out typically was preceded by spotty attendance followed by stopping attendance, making it uncertain at what point a new mentor needed to be assigned to a given youth. Similarly, dropping out by the youth was difficult to pinpoint. In some cases, Cohort 1 youth would stop attending the program because of transportation issues, lack of participation by their mentors, or general lack of interest. To address this issue, Cohort 2 incorporated a "case manager" whose job was to make certain youths attended the sessions and had access to transportation. In addition, this case manager (along with the facilitators and other mentors) served as a surrogate mentor in cases where a youth's mentor had dropped out of the program. Further modifications to the program model are needed to address these mentoring issues and should incorporate training to help mentors develop realistic expectations as well as social support mechanisms for coping with their frustrations.

3. What qualitative aspects resulted in a youth gaining a great deal versus not gaining very much from the program?

According to focus group results and interviews, a supportive and active mentor who was liked and respected by the youth was important to the youth's perceptions about the program. Similarly, program support from parents/guardians also was considered to contribute to youths' benefitting from ROP activities. Parent interviews further suggested that a good relationship between the initiate's parents/guardians and the mentor enhanced the initiate's experience, particularly when a team approach of providing consistent messages to the youth was incorporated. Although it would be expected that youths who attended more sessions gained more from the program, it is difficult to distinguish attendance from other variables such as parent and mentor support. Youths also had special topics that they reported liking more and benefitting more from (such as the sessions on sex and demystifying science and math).

Analysis of the process data for JTP suggested that having supervisors who understand effective management strategies for youths is key to benefits reaped, perhaps even more important than the job type or image. Interview data with the employment supervisors revealed that a minority of supervisors attempted to provide counseling to the youths about work ethics, the importance of saving money, and building toward a better future. There was no indication that employers provided more general "life guidance," as was given in the ROP program, although encouraging supervisors to address some of these issues is a component that could be considered for future program implementation.

4. How did participants' opinions and expectations about the program change from pre- to post-program?

Focus group and interview data suggest that most participants responded very favorably to all aspects of the ROP program. The qualitative data suggest that the most profound impacts were for the ROP. Through testimonials provided at the ROP graduation ceremony as well as discussions at the initiate focus groups, youths reported dramatic changes in their attitudes and behaviors as a result of participating in ROP. During the graduation ceremonies for ROP, the majority of the initiates shared how they had learned to be more responsible through the program and more broadly, to be a responsible African American male in today's society. They also reported—in both the ceremonies and the focus groups—having more respect toward their elders, a sense of purpose, and a sense of responsibility for "giving back" to their community. Several reported behavior changes, including better study habits, improved grades, more respect for their parents and other elders, and better manners. Parent testimonials at the ROP graduation ceremonies and interviews conducted by the ROP research team corroborated the reported behavioral changes, with the majority reporting pleasure and even amazement in the differences they had witnessed in their young man because of his participation in ROP. Relationships with the mentors (some of which continued after ROP had ended) were mentioned by several parents as essential ingredients to the changes they perceived in the youth. Similarly, although some mentors were disappointed with their relationships with the youth and others suggested areas for program improvement, the mentors' focus group data suggest an overall favorable impression to ROP and benefits from participation.

The JTP youth focus group data suggested that they had enjoyed the opportunity to work and had enjoyed receiving the money. A few discussed a greater appreciation for timeliness and the responsibility that goes with a job, as well as an improved appreciation of the "value" of their money and an interest in saving. The interviews with job supervisors suggested several had been pleasantly surprised at how well the youth had done in the employment situation, particularly in light of the young ages of some of the placements. Several suggested an improved appreciation for the youth and an enhanced willingness to work with them in the future. In general, though, qualitative results suggested the JTP was less effective for creating positive changes in behaviors and perceptions for the youth than was the ROP.

5. What improvements could be made to strengthen the program?

The qualitative data from the process evaluation suggest several areas for program improvement in the future. For the ROP program, mentors must be trained, to prepare them for frustrations encountered in their relationships with the initiates and to provide them with better coping tools. A few of the youths reported feeling "let down" by their mentors. In some cases, this was due to a poor match between youth/mentor personalities. In others, it apparently stemmed from the mentor abruptly stopping the relationship—dropping out either midway or at program end. For this reason, future programs should consider ways to allow for a gradual transition away from regular mentoring activities after the ROP program stops. This would allow for a "weaning" period—a transition expected to be particularly important for young men who previously have suffered from broken bonds with other significant men in their lives. Mentors should be made aware of the potential damage they can cause by prematurely severing the relationship, and a commitment should be extracted from them to the rigors of the mentoring role. A small stipend for funding continued activities with youths after the conclusion of ROP should be considered as well.

Qualitative data also suggest that the JTP job supervisors lacked sufficient training in working with youths and further that their potential may have been underutilized. Although an initial training session was offered, few of the supervisors attended. Adequate supervision of the youth is extremely time consuming, with very little real payback considering the relatively limited set of job skills a young man at this age is expected to have. A stipend to acknowledge the supervisor's efforts may be helpful. In addition, the role of the supervisors could be expanded somewhat so that they come to serve as "mentors" for the youth. Regularly scheduled sessions where the supervisor helps the youth understand more about good work behavior as well as more globally to discuss issues such as responsibility, conflict resolution, ethical practices, and so forth could be expected to build a stronger relationship between supervisor and youth and to ultimately produce enhanced benefits to the youth from the employment placement.