From evidence to practice: The example of Yarra Community Friends

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From evidence to practice

1. Introduction to the program

2. Evidence based practice

3. Interim findings

Yarra Community Friends

- Mentoring disadvantaged, isolated young people aged 6 – 14
- Early intervention
- 24 matches
- Program developed collaboratively by practitioners, researcher, city

What is evidence-based practice?

Evidence-based [practice] is about making decisions through the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of four sources of information:

1. practitioner expertise and judgment,
2. evidence from the local context,
3. a critical evaluation of the best available research evidence,
4. and the perspectives of those people who might be affected by the decision.

Briner et al 2009

Child mentoring programs

- A long history and strong public support.
- Most effective as a preventative program.
- Should include ongoing mentor training, structured activities, parent involvement, clear expectations for relationship.
- Research finds modest benefits at best, and then only in certain situations…

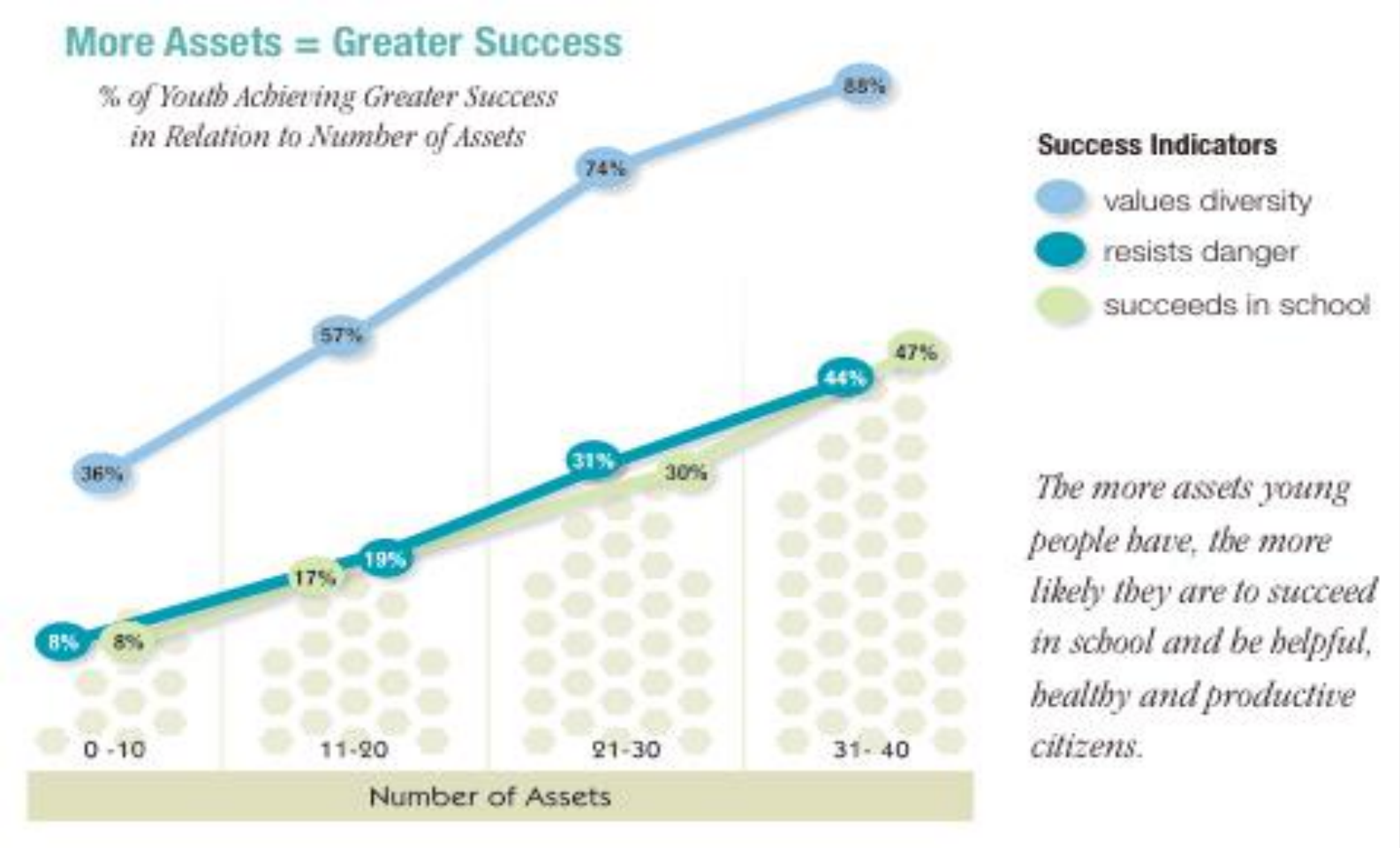
"...results have rarely, if ever, provided persuasive evidence of the kinds of transformative effects on young people that are widely cited as a rationale for investment in mentoring as an intervention strategy." *(DuBois et al 2002, p. 59).*

Positive Youth Development

- All young people have capacity to thrive
- Strengths-based approach
- Identify & maximize internal and external resources
- Acknowledges barriers and obstacles
- 5 C's: confidence, competence, character, caring and connection (+ contribution)

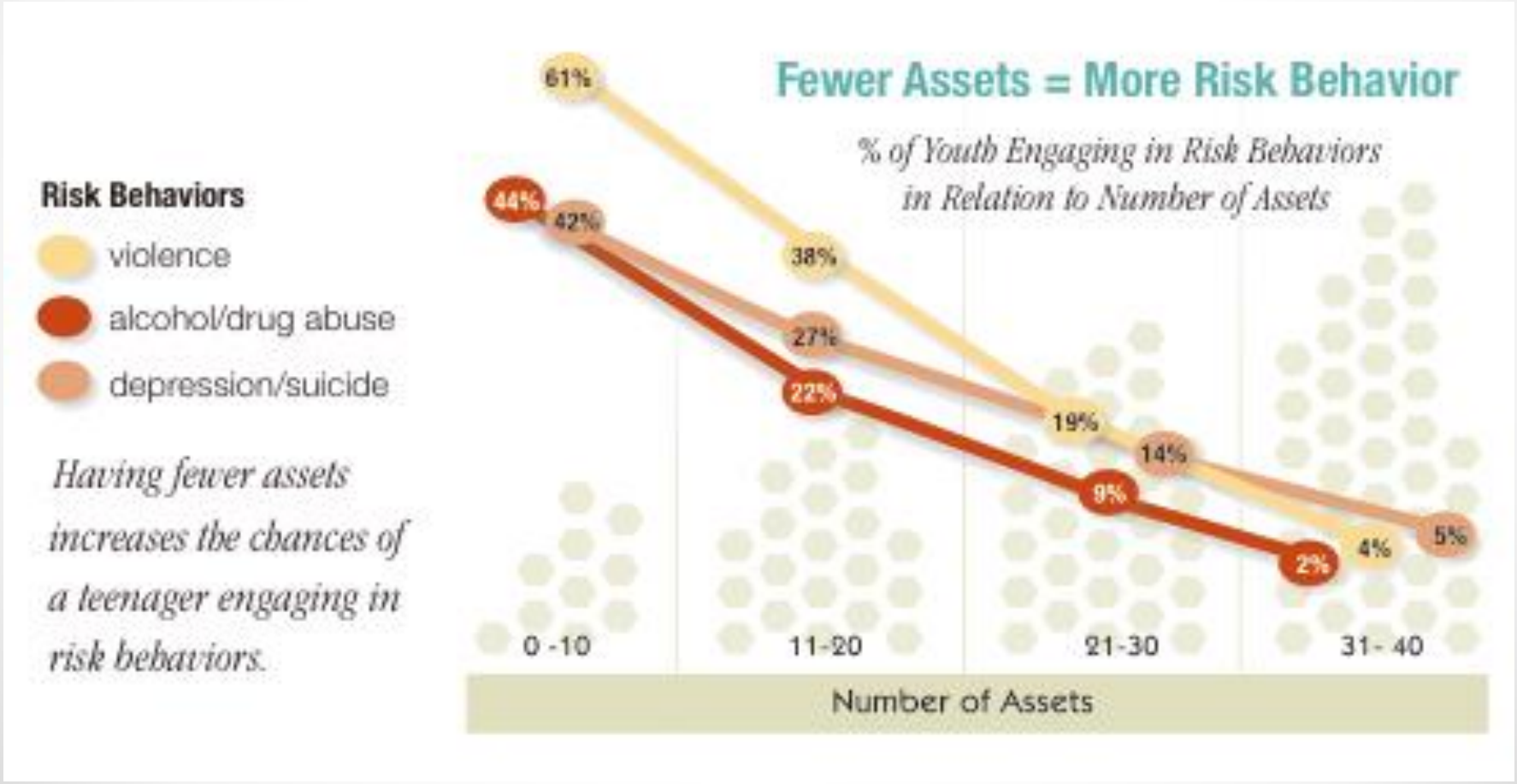
More assets = greater success

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Fewer assets = riskier behaviour

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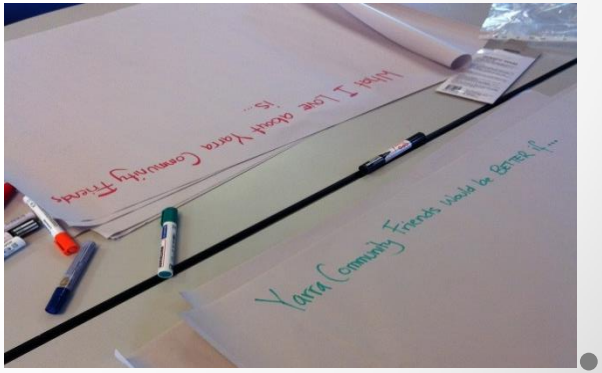
Statement of Intent

- To harness the social capital and generosity of spirit of the people in the City of Yarra.

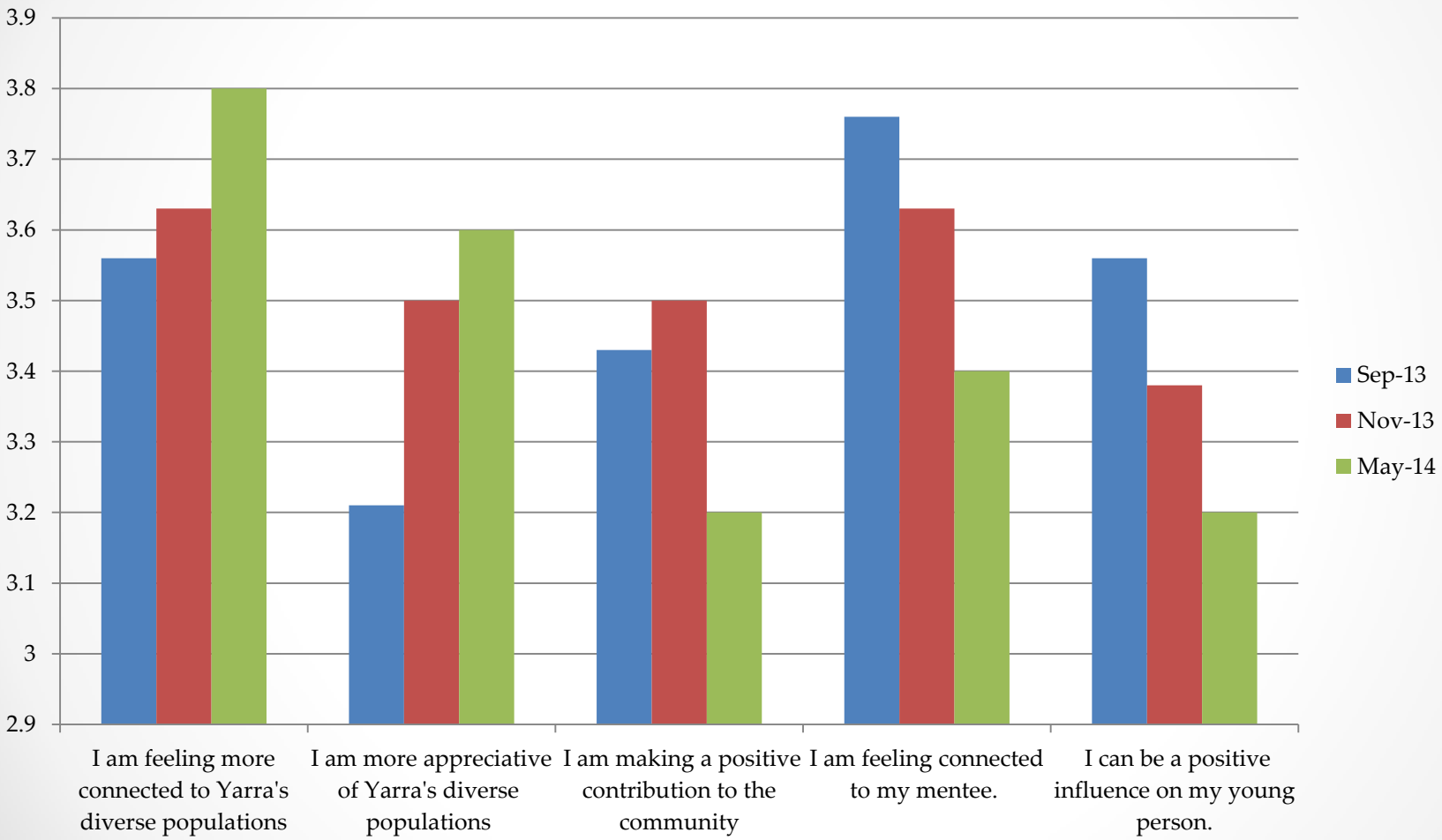
- To develop the internal and external resources of vulnerable children and young people so that they can enhance and contribute positively to the development of self, family, and community.

Evaluation Process

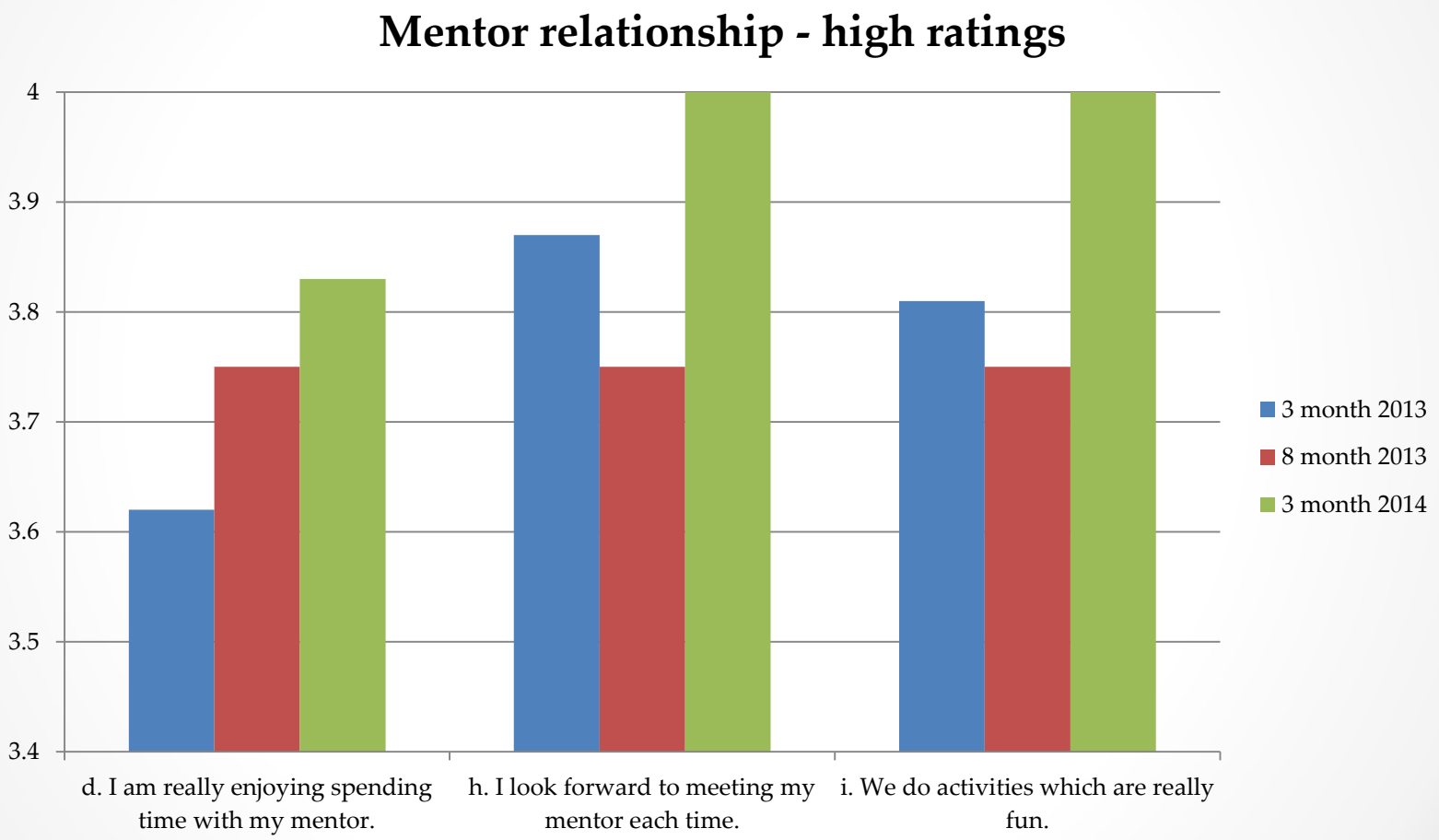
- Mentors: Qualitative & quantitative survey, workshop discussions
- Young people: Assisted quantitative survey, open-ended questions
- Families: Brief questionnaire (end of year)
- Case workers: Brief questionnaire (end of year)



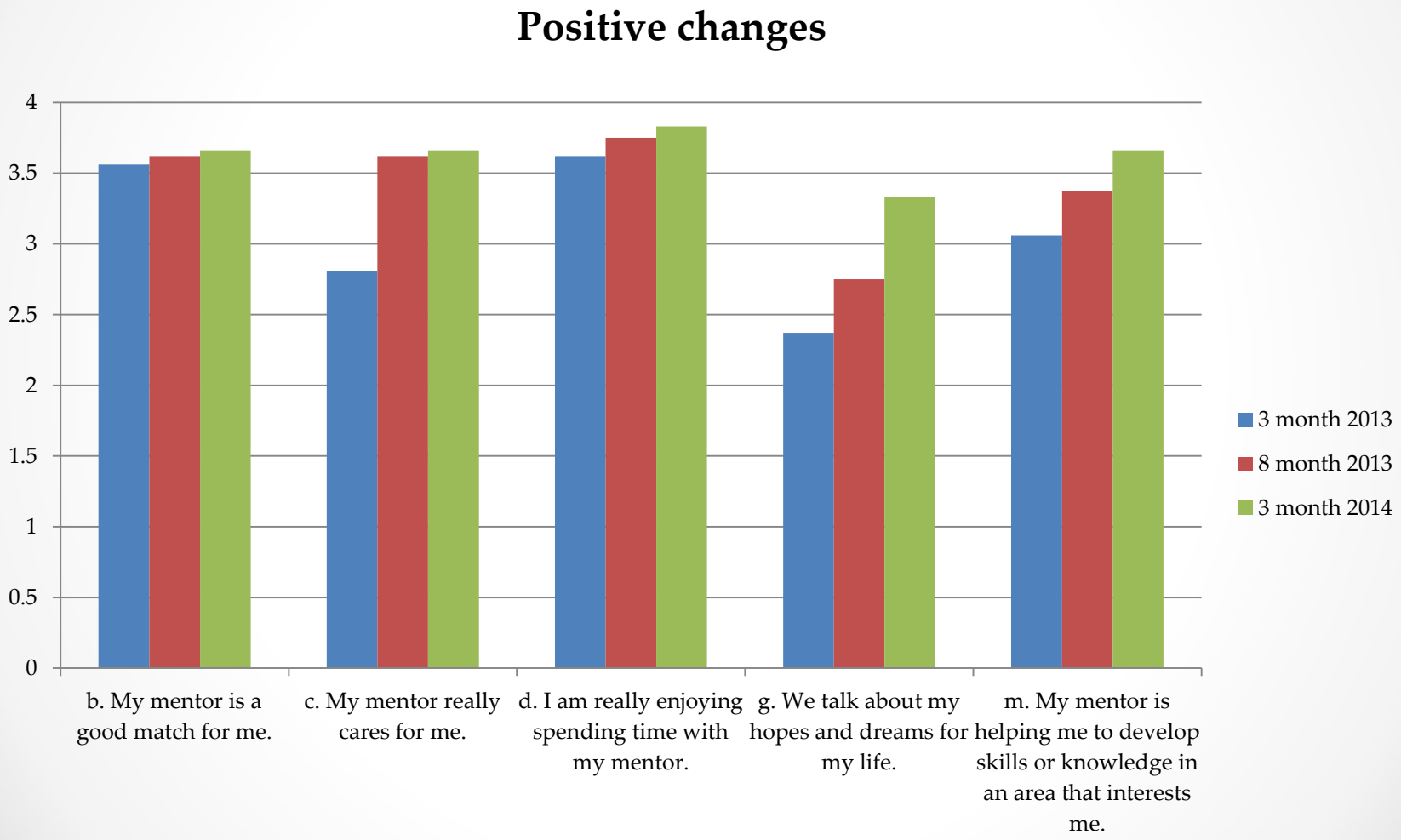
Mentor responses



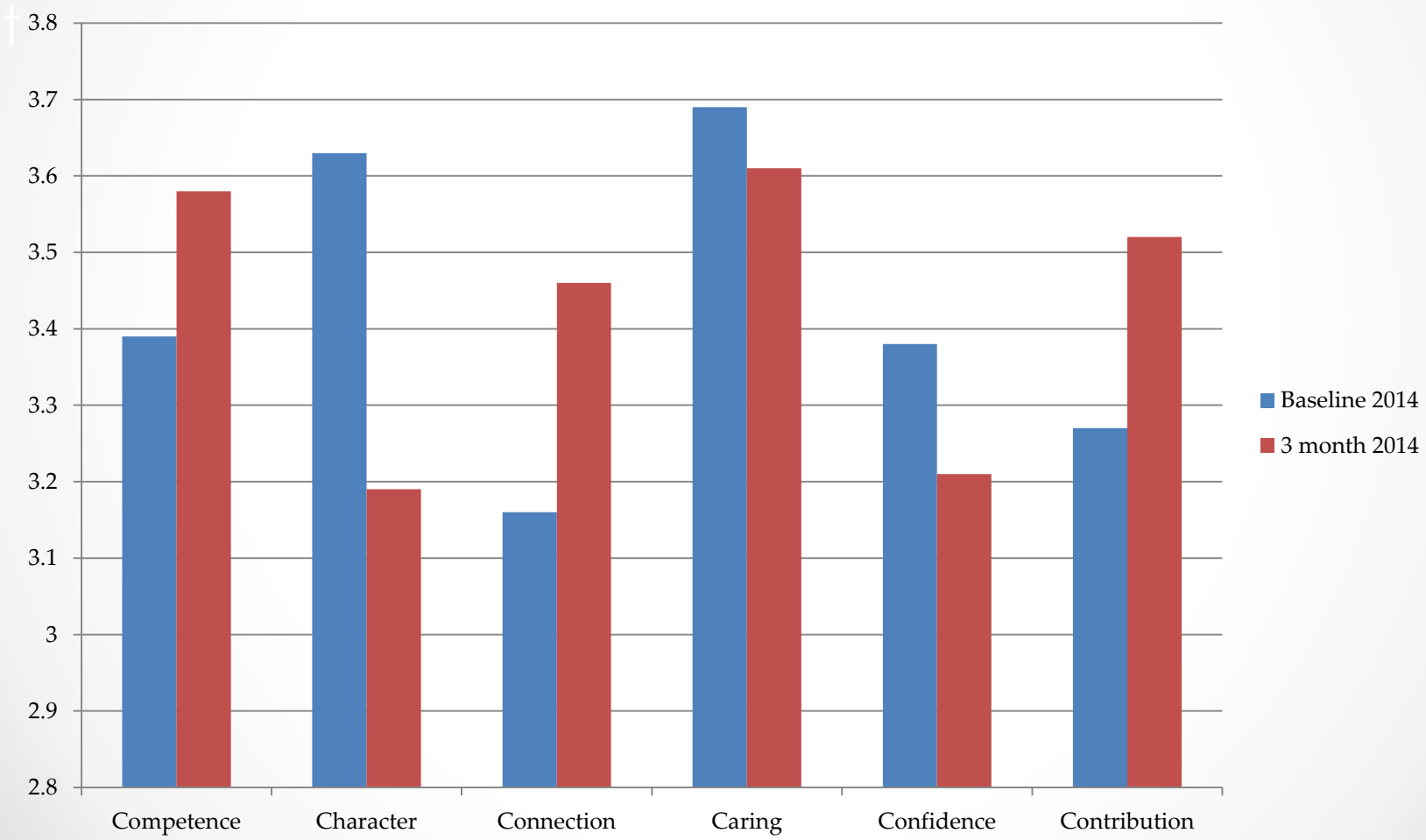
Young Peoples' Responses



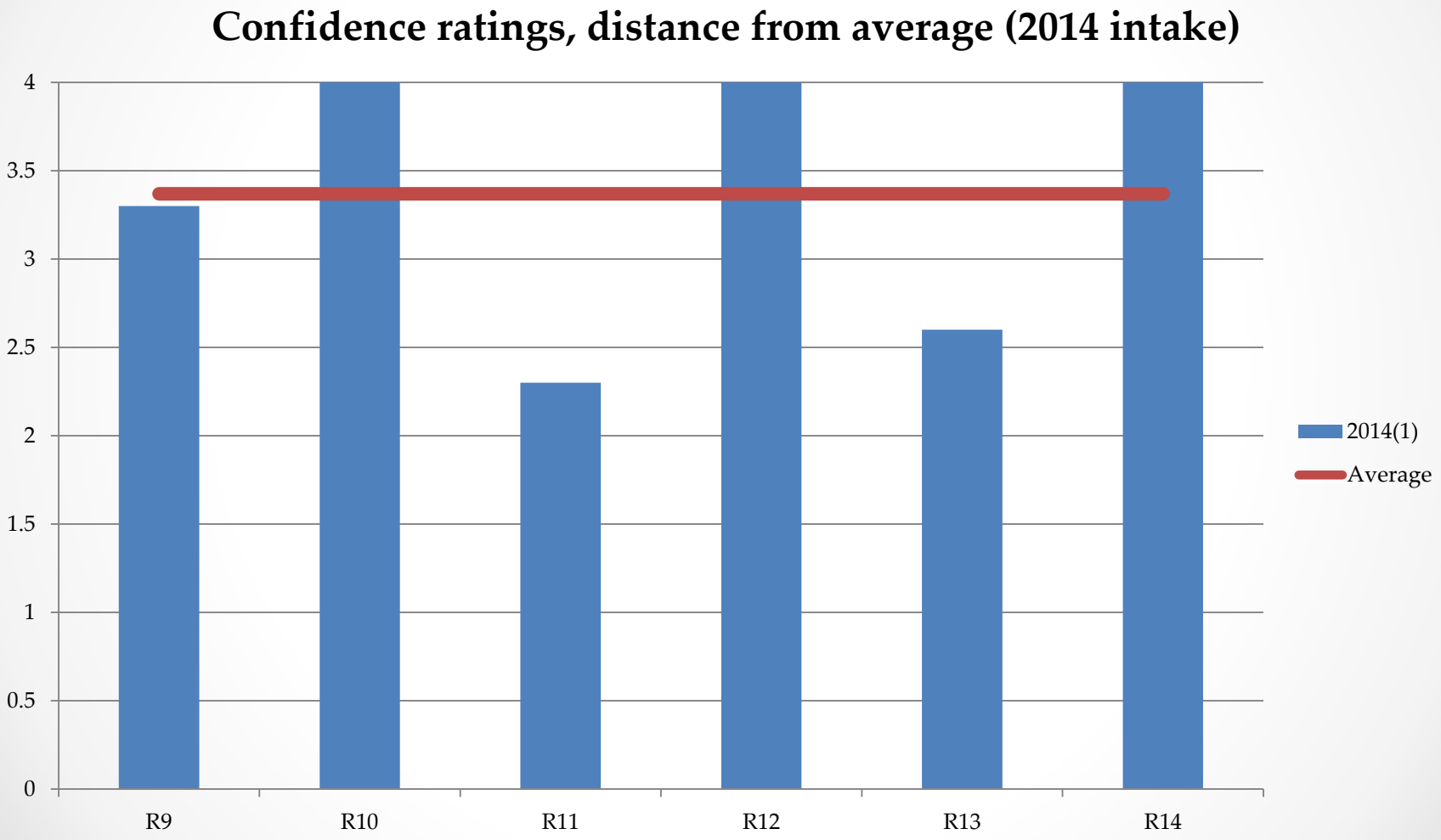
Young Peoples' Responses (2)



Young People's Responses (3)



Young People's Responses (4)



What can we learn?

- Instrument is too blunt, or too shortened?
- Sample size is too small? (R = 8, 6)
- The time period is too short? (T = 5 months)
- The program design has not fully integrated the Positive Youth Development framework?
- We need to complement the quantitative with qualitative?

Qualitative Responses

“My son has someone to talk to which makes him happier. My relationship with my son is better because he has someone else to go out with. He enjoys seeing things and social activities. There has been a small change in his attitude. Before he told me he doesn’t like me to talk to him too much. Now he doesn’t get so angry with me… Because I speak Vietnamese and I speak little English my son really needs someone so he can express what he thinks with other people in English.”

Yarra Community Friends

