

**Exploring Friend's Parents and Family Friends as Natural Mentors for Youth: Contexts,  
Motivation, and Barriers**  
**Undergraduate Article Critique**

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The article assesses the role of the youth's friend's parent and the parent's friends as natural mentors through Granovetter's theory (1973). In the introduction, the authors identify natural mentors as individuals connected through family or social relationships. In the methodology section, the article includes two studies. The first study assesses the sociodemographic predictors that determine youths' ability to have a friend's parent as a mentor. The study uses Add Health data to investigate 3,133 youths. The second study assesses the motivations, barriers, and contexts influencing adults to mentor their friend's child. The study uses the Power of Relationships Study to investigate 343 adults. The result section shows that natural mentors varied according to family structure, race, religion, and other sociodemographic variables. Study 2 shows that natural mentors mostly engaged in institutional mentoring, such as schools and religious facilities. In their discussion, the authors argue that the natural mentoring process is important in the development of youths. Natural mentors should be able to influence the development of youths since they do not experience the same barriers as other mentors.

One learns that family, friends, and parents are different from other mentors, as they often have more access to the child. Yet, they can still self-identify as a mentor. Family friends and friends' parents differ from other mentors, as they often have more access to the child and often self-identify as a mentor. Sociodemographic predictors of having a friend's parent or family friend mentor include family structure, race or ethnicity, and parental education. While the family structure and parental education are generally associated with various relationships and social networks, race or ethnicity is not. Overall, youth with both parents who are highly educated have the largest social networks. Specifically, most of these mentors were asked by the child's parent to mentor. Friends' Parent or Family Friends could spend extended periods with their friends because they lived together and were in frequent contact.

Family life education includes teaching parenting, marriage, family dynamics, and the development of social relationships. The focus is on the dynamic interplay between the parents, children, and peers. A key goal is to help families develop their strengths and become more capable partners in a supportive dyad. Friend's parent or family friends can act as an invaluable resource for youth as they grow up by creating strong bonds and providing caring guidance. Family life educators can use this method to teach children of various ages to become sensitive to the feelings and needs of others. Some of these educators see themselves as a family. The method helps create connections, teaches respect, and enhances the value of relationships. Family life education is beneficial at all ages but vital in adolescence and later parenting years.

The article will improve Child Development and Family Studies by recognizing that each family and situation is unique, yet there are consistencies to which we can find meaning and significance. The article identifies child development as a social role that is both highly individualized and situational. The authors also demonstrate that there are various types of mentors for children, specifically parents, family friends, and friends' parents. These relationships foster the development of social skills and other developmental milestones. The article explores how both natural and non-natural or assigned mentors positively impact their mentees. Natural mentors such

as friends' parents help their friends because they see their struggles and want to help them overcome them. They are also willing to invest time in helping the child reach their goals. Educators in the future will adopt this strategy to improve society by increasing the mentor's engagement with the children.

### **Reference**

Christensen, K. M., & Poon, C. (2022). Exploring friend's parents and family friends as natural mentors for youth: Contexts, motivation, and barriers. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 31(11), 2947-2959. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-02153-5>