

**P/PV**

# **Big Brothers/ Big Sisters**

A Study of Program Practices

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Winter 1993

Public/Private Ventures is a national, not-for-profit corporation that designs, manages, and evaluates social policy initiatives aimed at helping youth whose lack of preparation for the work force hampers their chances for productive lives. P/PV's work is supported by funds from both the public and private sectors.

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## PREFACE

The concept of mentoring as a discrete intervention is relatively new within the context of youth-serving programs. Although practitioners and policymakers have embraced the idea that programs can provide youth with supportive relationships, little research evidence currently exists to support this claim. Further, the concept of mentoring shares little common meaning among practitioners and no set of established best practices or operational lessons. To determine the usefulness of mentoring as an intervention for serving at-risk youth, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) has undertaken a four-year research initiative that addresses the following questions:

1. Are there large numbers of adults with enough flexible time and emotional resources to take on the demands of mentoring at-risk youngsters?
2. Can mentoring be integrated into large-scale youth-serving institutions, specifically juvenile justice agencies?
3. Is there a set of practices or features that roughly characterize the adult role in an effective mentoring relationship?
4. What level of training and support activities, services and costs are required to administer mentoring programs effectively? What are "best practices" in these programs--how much training, screening, matching and supervision are required or optimal?
5. Will participating in these mentoring programs make important observable changes in the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of the at-risk young people and mentors?

Because no one study can thoroughly address all five questions, P/PV's research agenda includes a set of studies that together will provide credible evidence for answering these questions. That agenda includes studies of 15 Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs, two P/PV pilot programs that match adult volunteers with youth adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, six college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Compact's Campus Partners in Learning, four Linking Lifetimes programs developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning, and programs sponsored by the Washington, D.C. I Have a Dream Foundation.

This, the first of four studies in P/PV's evaluation of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, documents the implementation of the BB/BS program model and its effectiveness. The study examines the model by analyzing variations in program practice among eight BB/BS agencies, which were selected, in part, to reflect differences in recruitment, screening, training, matching and supervision.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the early 1980s, a call went out for expansion of the number of programs that provide adult mentoring for at-risk youth. Advocates of mentoring cited the many studies documenting the fact that at-risk youth increasingly grow up in isolation from positive relationships with significant adult figures; other studies attesting to benefits to be gained when young people are able to seek out or attract supportive relationships with adults within or outside of their family networks; and a conviction that mentoring could ameliorate many youth's problems by attracting citizen involvement in low-cost, minimally structured programs.

In response, the mid- to late-80s saw a proliferation of programs seeking to provide adult support to at-risk youth. These programs cropped up under many auspices--churches, community-based organizations, the business sector and wealthy individuals. The adults who provided support were known by various names--role models, mentors, advocates, surrogate parents, confidantes, benefactors and friends.

The social entrepreneurs who came forward to develop these programs were inclined to create them anew, rather than build on existing programs. Thus, many new programs were developed with little conscious attempt to learn from previous experience.

And there is, in fact, considerable previous experience: through its network of agencies, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) has been providing adult support to youth from single-parent households for nearly 90 years. In 1991, staff in the nearly 500 Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies across the country supervised more than 70,000 adults and youth in one-to-one relationships. However, no comprehensive study of BB/BSA had yet been undertaken.

In order to learn from Big Brothers'/Big Sisters' experience, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), with the cooperation of BB/BSA and support from the Lilly Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Commonwealth Fund and an anonymous donor, has begun a five-year investigation of the effectiveness of the BB/BS approach to creating and maintaining adult/youth relationships, and an exploration of its potential for wider application in social programming for at-risk youth.

The research effort comprises four distinct studies, each of which focuses on a key aspect of the BB/BS program. They are: 1) how the relationships Big Brothers and Big Sisters form with their assigned youth develop, are sustained, and end; 2) the process of becoming a volunteer and a description of volunteers' characteristics; 3) outcomes for youth paired with a Big Brother or Big Sister, compared with those of a randomly assigned group of youth who are not matched; and 4) the program practices that undergird the one-to-one interaction for which BB/BSA is known. The latter study is the topic of this report.



BB/BS agencies take the youth's and parents' preferences into account in making these decisions.

Youth are asked about the kind of Big Brother or Big Sister they want--age, race, interests--and the kinds of activities in which they would like to engage with their "Big." Parents' preferences are likewise considered--the parent may accept or reject a recommended match in much the same way as the agency accepts or rejects applicants. As such, youth are much more likely to find the relationship satisfying (Styles and Morrow, 1992), and parents are more likely to support and encourage them in following through with their commitment to the relationship.

### Rates of Interaction

BB/BS programs stand out among mentoring programs in both the longevity of the matches that they create and in the frequency of meetings that occur between the adults and youth they bring together. Nationwide, BB/BSA boasts an average length of match of one-and-a-half years. At the study sites, the survey of volunteers in active matches found that the volunteers had been paired with their current Little Brothers and Little Sisters an average of 28 months, with the longest having lasted more than 13 years.

The data also revealed a very high rate of interaction between the volunteers and youth. Virtually all (96%) of the first-year matches had met at least once during the four-week period about which volunteers were queried. In fact, they had met an average of 3.1 times during that period. In newer mentoring programs we have reviewed, the rates of interaction approximate BB/BSA's only in programs where the adults are given a stipend, or the youth are in a residential facility.

The data from the present study suggest that BB/BSA's effectiveness in creating matches with a very high rate of interaction applies equally to the various subgroups within its total client population.

### Subgroup Differences

Girls who come to BB/BS agencies will likely be matched with Bigs sooner than boys who come forward. Once matched, rates of interaction are very similar for boys and girls, though there is a small, marginally significant tendency for boys and their Big Brothers to meet more frequently than Big Sister/Little Sister pairs.

In comparing combined agencies (which serve both boys and girls) and discrete agencies (which serve either boys or girls), one finds that the likelihood of matches having met during the past four weeks was higher for both boys and girls in discrete agencies. This difference was significant only for girls, suggesting that they derive a particular advantage from being served in a single-sex agency.

Minority youth typically wait longer to be matched than their white counterparts. They are thus more likely to remain on the waiting list for years, or to age out of eligibility without ever getting a Big Brother or Big Sister. In the eight study agencies, there were 100 minority youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched, compared with only 65 white youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched. This situation was exacerbated for minority males, 133 of whom were on the waiting list for every 100 matched.

Those minority youth who get through the waiting list are likely to be paired with an adult of another race--76 percent of minority youth in the survey were in cross-race matches. White youth are rarely (if ever) paired with an adult of another race.

Minority youth in same-race matches and those in cross-race matches were equally likely to have met with their Big Brother or Big Sister during the study period, and their rates of interaction were also similar. These findings, then, support the practice of making cross-race matches--a practice already justified by the scarcity of minority Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

Although these findings are encouraging, one should hold final judgment of this practice in abeyance, since the study also found that among pairs that fail to meet, loss of interest is more often cited as a reason by cross-race pairs than by same-race pairs. P/PV's forthcoming qualitative study of Big Brother/Big Sister relationships may provide further insight into this finding.

### Supporting the Match

The BB/BS approach to creating adult/youth relationships undergirds the match at many points in its life--through orientation, pre-match training, post-match training, in-service training, extra-match services or ongoing supervision. It is this aggregate level of support that has resulted in the high rate of interaction that distinguishes BB/BSA from other mentoring programs.

Supervision is a hallmark of the BB/BS approach to mentoring. Caseworkers maintain regular contact with all match participants--volunteers, youth and parents alike--during the first year of the match, and intervene as necessary by providing information and/or referrals. In addition, any participant may call the caseworker on an as-needed basis. Since the caseworker is in regular contact with the youth and parent as well as the volunteer, the youth's (and parent's) concerns remain a driving force throughout the match.

Consistent with this emphasis, supervision was the program practice most associated with a high rate of interaction: matches at agencies providing regular supervision were meeting at the highest rates. Those agencies that--in an attempt to better handle increasing caseloads--reduced the nature or frequency of supervision saw, in some cases, an increase in the number failing to meet at all within a given period; in others, a reduction in the

actual number of meetings occurring between the youth and adults within that same period; and, in others, a loss of interest sufficient to lead to a break-off in contact.

### Meeting the Demand

Although BB/BSA is the oldest and largest mentoring program in operation in the United States, it, like many of the newer mentoring initiatives, nevertheless struggles to recruit volunteers in sufficient numbers for the youth seeking Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Across all agencies, and within the eight agencies that were the subject of this study, the number of youth actually being matched was only a fraction of the number who wanted a match. While its sizable waiting list in part reflects the program's appeal, it also attests to the fact that volunteer recruitment has not kept up with demand.

BB/BSA's difficulty in recruiting adequate numbers of volunteers applies equally to its traditional base of volunteers (the white, college-educated, middle- to upper-income individuals that it has traditionally attracted) and the newer populations that it has increasingly sought to recruit (minority volunteers, volunteers from working-class backgrounds).

Across mentoring programs, the amount of time volunteers are expected to commit is widely viewed as the single greatest deterrent to recruitment (Freedman, 1992). Thus, programs that have reduced time commitments have generally succeeded in volunteer recruitment: within BB/BSA, those agencies accepting less than a full year's commitment were able to recruit college students and military personnel who might otherwise have been screened out.

Similarly, reducing the number of required meetings was an effective volunteer recruitment tool. Once the matches were made, however, the dynamics of the relationship took over and these volunteers exceeded the requirements. In fact, volunteers at sites requiring fewer meetings met with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters at rates that were all but indistinguishable from those in agencies where the requirement remained the traditional once per week.

### CONCLUSION

Since the mentoring field has been characterized as having "fervor without infrastructure," it presents an inadequate basis for social policy. However, there are a number of practices in operation at BB/BS agencies that appear to be associated with an increased probability that pairs will meet, and that, if emulated, could provide needed structure.

These include "hard" screening procedures for determining volunteer eligibility--e.g., police checks, personal references and employment status; a well-implemented and consistent system of supervision that will, at minimum, prevent egregious deviations from the program's policies regarding the required frequency of meetings; and a match procedure

that takes into account parents' and youth's preferences. Future research will determine whether these procedures also have the effect of improving long-term outcomes for participants.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As they prepare for the transition to adulthood, all youth progress through recognizable stages--late childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence (Scales, 1991). Throughout these stages, youth must establish an independent identity, develop a self-concept and fill their needs for affiliation, acceptance, affection, approval and competence (Smith and Gambone, 1992). To meet the socialization goals sought for any child--becoming an autonomous, motivated, healthy individual who is successful in the arenas of school and work--youth should accumulate a number and variety of positive experiences throughout their development (Smith and Gambone, 1992; Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). However, whether and how youth are able to have these experiences depends on the quality and constancy of all the influences in their lives (Pittman, 1992).

Unfortunately, for too many poor youth, both positive experiences and positive influences are few (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). Approximately one in four children of the 28 million aged 10 to 17 are in dire need of assistance because they are growing up in environments that place them at high risk of engaging in multiple problem behaviors. These youth are likely to fail in or fail to attend school, and to experience difficulties in making connections between school and work and in relating to peers, teachers and parents. These children are also more likely to have low expectations for achievement and low resistance to peer influences, and to lack parental support (Dryfoos, 1990).

Numerous social programs have been designed to provide these youth with the needed positive experiences and influences they lack. And although any single intervention is quantitatively modest relative to the total time youth spend interacting with other major influences (both positive and negative), policymakers and practitioners are coming together to define what elements, either alone or together, must be put in place to improve the prospects of a large share of our country's children (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992).

One important element is that of positive, caring relationships with adults in programmatic settings. Intensive individual attention and support have been shown to be requisites for helping children improve performance and succeed (Dryfoos, 1990). Young people themselves often cite an adult who came into their lives through the schools or a social program as the most positive influence in helping them make critical decisions, such as remaining in school or an education/training program (Higgins, 1988). The consensus among all fields and practice is far-reaching: every child needs to be attached to a responsible adult who pays attention to that child's individual needs (Dryfoos, 1990).

According to Freedman (1992):

Creating adult/youth relationships in programmatic settings goes beyond the inculcation of academic and employment skills, the proliferation of computer-assisted instruction, and the emphasis on developing competen-

cies so characteristic of many of our efforts to prepare at-risk young people for the world. Intensive personal relationships with adults are for the most part absent from social programs for youth, and the experience of young people suggests that these relationships may impart essential skills for surviving in a tumultuous world, where developing psychological and social maturity may be just as crucial to achieving long-term self-sufficiency as a firm grasp on the three Rs.

In response to this consensus, "mentoring" programs that pair adult volunteers with youth have been proliferating across the country to provide support to young people experiencing schooling or personal difficulties. The progenitor of this mentoring movement is Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA), the largest and oldest organization designed to provide youth with caring, supportive adult relationships. BB/BSA has been in operation for nearly 90 years and currently consists of 504 Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) local affiliates in 49 states, supervising thousands of youth in one-to-one relationships with adult volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Characteristics of the BB/BS approach include:

- Diversity. BB/BS agencies exist in communities of all sizes and social compositions. Additional diversity exists in the cultural, age, socioeconomic and racial characteristics of youth and volunteers.
- One-to-one interaction. The organization registered the term One-to-One with the United States Patent Office to describe the programming it offers: one-to-one matches between adult volunteers and youth. Although agencies do offer supplemental social services and activities for matched and waiting youth, providing a young person with a relationship with an adult volunteer is typically the central focus.
- Standardization. A comprehensive set of procedures for recruitment of volunteers, confidentiality for participants, and assignment and supervision of matches has been developed by the national organization. As the history of the program illustrates, a belief in program structure is central to the BB/BS approach. As early as 1922, standards were developed to guide programs in their implementation.
- Longevity and national visibility. In nearly 90 years of operation, BB/BSA has maintained a consistently positive reputation among both professionals and the general public.

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<sup>1</sup> BB/BSA has been in existence only since 1977, when Big Sisters International and Big Brothers of America merged. However, the "movement" dates back to 1902, when the first Big Brothers agency was formed. For a detailed account of BB/BSA's history, see Beiswinger (1985).



Over time, BB/BS agencies have seen changes in the needs of the communities they serve, and have sought to respond. One issue of great concern to BB/BSA is its relative effectiveness in serving specific subgroups of youth. Given the fairly recent (1977) merger between Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies, BB/BSA is concerned about whether boys and girls are being served equally well in combined agencies (agencies that serve both boys and girls), and whether these agencies are capable of providing as appropriate an intervention as are discrete agencies (those that serve only boys or only girls).<sup>2</sup>

An additional concern is serving the increasing number of minority youth being referred to BB/BS agencies, which, like other volunteer programs, experience difficulty attracting minority volunteers. Agencies have responded by actively targeting minority volunteers, while matching most minority youth with available white volunteers. Because no body of research currently speaks to the relative effectiveness of same-race and cross-race matches, the debate over the appropriateness of cross-race matching continues.

BB/BS agencies have also seen the composition of their client population change from that of middle-class youth with one primary need--a male role model--to that of lower-income youth with multiple needs and risk factors, including living in resource-deprived neighborhoods and witnessing and/or being victims of physical or sexual abuse.

#### BB/BSA AND THE MENTORING FIELD

It is important to distinguish between BB/BS agencies and more recently established mentoring programs, which generally differ in both purpose and design. BB/BSA is broad in scope--working on the development of the "whole person"--and intense in commitment, with some relationships continuing for years (Flaxman, 1992; Pittman, 1992). Other mentoring programs tend to be more specific about both their activities and their goals, such as career development or tutoring (Flaxman, 1992; Pittman, 1992). Perhaps the most important distinction between the new breed of mentoring programs and BB/BSA is the extraordinary diversity and decentralization of the newer efforts. As applied to these programs, the term "mentoring" describes practices ranging from monthly hour-long meetings in a mentor's office to discuss a youth's progress on a chosen career track, to three or four meetings per week--some scheduled, some spontaneous--to handle day-to-day problems and issues.

Part of the appeal of the initial wave of mentoring programs implemented during the 1980s was their seeming simplicity: advocates of these programs contended that adults could "naturally" work with youth--they required only time and dedication, not training or supervision. Founders of these programs nostalgically recalled adults who served as

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<sup>2</sup> The Big Brothers and Big Sisters movements have developed on parallel tracks. Although different philosophies and goals drove program implementation at separate Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies, the creation and maintenance of one-to-one matches between youth and adult volunteers was central to their respective missions.

mentors to them--coaches, teachers and neighbors--and wanted to recreate that type of support for today's youth. Thus, early recommendations for establishing and maintaining mentoring programs typically touted a laissez-faire approach that resonated with sponsors wary of instituting procedural and structural requirements they felt would intimidate volunteers.

During the first National Mentoring conference, held in Washington, D.C. in 1990, the Commonwealth Fund made recommendations based on findings from a study of the Career Beginnings program conducted by Louis Harris and Associates. The Fund's recommendations included spending less time preparing or training mentors, making more cross-race matches, and focusing match supervision on the critical first five weeks.<sup>3</sup> These findings received considerable coverage in the popular press and reinforced the notion that effective mentoring requires little in the way of structure provided enough volunteers come forward to be matched.

Although this notion of mentoring continues to be influential, other advocates of mentoring have argued that for mentoring to flourish--for it to be transformed from the latest fad to a lasting phenomenon--its practitioners and advocates must carefully define its concept and practice, and understand how programs can be most effectively implemented and reach the greatest number of youth. As early as 1989, the Abell Foundation, sponsor of the RAISE program in Baltimore, published a mentoring manual that called for the very structure others eschewed, including the training of mentors, the involvement of the family in the match, the need for goal-setting and the importance of ongoing supervision. The Mentoring Guide, a comprehensive handbook authored by the New York State Mentoring Committee, also calls for structure in program design and development; it states:

There needs to be a structure and direction to the program . . . It is better to start out simply, and do the program well, rather than be too ambitious and not succeed.

In his 1992 report, The Kindness of Strangers, Freedman warns of the danger of "fervor without infrastructure" in implementing mentoring programs. He writes:

Merely hitching adults to kids, without adequate infrastructure, may create a sense of action, but is likely to accomplish little. It may even backfire. If a relationship engenders hurt or reinforces negative stereotypes, it is worse than no mentoring at all.

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<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth Fund's recommendations are listed in its 1990 publication Mentoring: Lessons Learned, in a section titled "Best Advice for Your Mentoring Program."

These comments suggest that without infrastructure, programs are likely to encounter problems or even fail to address adequately the needs of the youth who seek their services.

What is particularly interesting about the emergence of the new breed of mentoring programs is their lack of connection to BB/BSA. Although these programs seem to be reinventing the wheel as they identify and develop program practices and materials that BB/BS agencies have refined over many years, they have also challenged the BB/BS program model by serving youth less likely to be served by BB/BS one-to-one relationships: poor minority youth living in high-risk neighborhoods; youth whose parents are unlikely to follow through with the application process; and youth who are already exhibiting negative behaviors, such as involvement in the juvenile justice system, school failure or expulsion, and pregnancy.<sup>4</sup> Further, these mentoring programs have streamlined the process of bringing volunteers into their fold.

With these programs coming to the forefront, competing for both scarce funding and volunteers, BB/BS agencies are faced with a dilemma: to compete or provide these mentoring programs with information to promote their development. At the national level, BB/BSA has chosen to do both. Through its affiliation with One-to-One Partnerships, Inc., BB/BSA has taken a leadership role in establishing standards for the mentoring field. BB/BSA has also decided to revisit its guidelines to determine whether they can be streamlined to process volunteers more quickly and tailored to meet the changing needs of youth.

#### P/PV'S RESEARCH INITIATIVE

In 1989, P/PV embarked on a five-year initiative designed to explore the research and policy implications of creating adult mentoring relationships for at-risk youth, and to test the hypothesis that such relationships can facilitate positive development. (See Preface.) This initiative was prompted, in part, by encouraging findings from P/PV's 1988 study of five grassroots intergenerational mentoring programs. In this study, Freedman found that two-thirds of elder/youth pairs participating in these programs had established strong bonds.

As the cornerstone of this research agenda, P/PV designed a four-year evaluation of BB/BSA that can address both BB/BSA's concerns and the many broader questions rarely examined in programs that facilitate relationships between adults and youth. The research effort involves four separate studies, each of which is designed to inform the others, and which together investigate a range of important operational issues. The four

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<sup>4</sup> While BB/BS agencies do not typically serve these categories of at-risk youth as part of their "traditional" match programs, several, including a handful of those in this study, have developed separate match programs designed to meet the needs of specific at-risk populations, such as pregnant teens or juvenile offenders.

studies are described briefly in the following sections. The fourth, a study of program practices, is the first study to be completed and is the focus of this report.

### The Impact Study

It has never been conclusively demonstrated that youth who participate in BB/BS programs fare better than they would have had they not participated. To determine whether, in the aggregate, relationships with Big Brothers or Big Sisters facilitate positive outcomes for youth (e.g., improved school performance and prosocial behavior), approximately 1,100 youth between the ages of 10 and 15, for whom the services of BB/BS agencies have been requested, are being randomly assigned to two groups, with one group receiving a Big Brother or Big Sister, and the other remaining on the waiting list for a volunteer.

Sample members are interviewed when accepted into the program and again 18 months later, and their responses are compared. In addition to providing measures of benefits, the study will also report youth's perceptions of their Big Brother or Big Sister and the relationship they have developed.

### The Relationship Formation Study

This study focuses on the intervention itself--i.e., the relationship the Big Brother or Big Sister forms with the Little Brother or Little Sister--examining the relationship's content (what the pairs do together and talk about), its process (how and why these relationships develop, sustain and end), and its practices (what constitutes effective practices in these relationships). Further, the study is designed to examine the similarities and differences between relationships formed with girls, most of whom live with their mothers, and those formed with boys, most of whom do not live with their fathers. The study will also compare same-race and cross-race matches.

To complete the study, 80 pairs (10 each from eight agencies) who have been matched for 1.5 years or less are being interviewed individually at two points. These interviews are designed to examine pair members' interactions and satisfaction with the relationship, as well as changes in the relationship over time.

Four of the agencies selected to participate in the relationship formation study are also involved in the impact study. This overlap is not coincidental. To determine whether effective or ineffective relationships influence outcomes for youth, P/PV researchers will interview 10 randomly selected treatment youth and their Big Brothers or Big Sisters at each of the four overlap sites within one month of the impact study follow-up interview.

## The Volunteer Applicant Pool Study

This study is designed to examine the process of becoming a volunteer from inquiry to match--providing insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the screening process as well as the characteristics of those adults who come forward to volunteer. Because the study is designed to examine volunteer "fall off," or those points at which volunteers drop out of the screening process, focus group discussions will be held with applicants who either elected to screen themselves out of the process or were screened out by the agency. BB/BS volunteer records will also be reviewed to quantify when potential volunteers discontinue the application process and when agencies are most likely to reject volunteers.

## A Study of Program Practices

This, the first study in P/PV's evaluation of BB/BSA, documents the implementation of the BB/BS program model and its effectiveness. Specifically, it is designed to determine whether the mandated elements of the BB/BS program are effective in facilitating meetings between youth and adults--an important consideration in a field where programs continue to develop without clear guidelines defining effective practices. An examination of the BB/BS program model can provide credible evidence and information to help identify program practices that may be critical to the implementation of a successful mentoring program. Throughout its history, BB/BSA has sought a balance between standardized procedures and flexibility in programming. Thus, this study identifies both "state of the art" practices worthy of emulation by the mentoring field and areas where greater flexibility in adapting BB/BS practices might be beneficial.

The methods for determining the model's effectiveness and identifying critical practices are twofold. First, the study examines the program model by focusing on variation in program operations among a small number of BB/BS agencies, which were selected, in part, to reflect differences in recruitment, screening, training, matching and supervision practices.

Second, the effectiveness of the BB/BS program model is compared with the effectiveness of three newer mentoring program initiatives P/PV has studied: six college-based mentoring programs funded by Campus Compact's Campus Partners in Learning (CPIL), which pair college students with middle-school-aged youth (Tierney and Branch, 1992); two P/PV pilot mentoring programs that match volunteers with youth adjudicated to the juvenile justice system (Greim, 1992); and four intergenerational mentoring programs, developed by Temple University's Center for Intergenerational Learning, which match volunteers who are 55 and older with at-risk youth (Styles and Morrow, 1992).

This study addresses key questions in the following areas of program practice:

- **Recruitment.** For both large and small mentoring programs, the demand for volunteers appears to outweigh the number of adults willing to volunteer. Further, many programs have difficulty attracting men of all races and minority volunteers. How do BB/BS agencies compare? Do adequate numbers of adults volunteer to become Big Brothers and Big Sisters? What recruitment techniques are used to attract minority volunteers?
- **Screening.** What is the appropriate balance between screening in and screening out adults interested in participating in BB/BS programs?
- **Training.** What information should be imparted to volunteers and youth as they enter a mentoring program? What is the purpose of volunteer training in BB/BS agencies?
- **Matching.** What criteria are used to assign matches? Are cross-race matches as effective as same-race matches?
- **Supervision.** What level of supervision is necessary to facilitate meetings between youth and adults?<sup>5</sup>

From Summer 1991 through Winter 1992, two P/PV staff members visited each of eight BB/BS agencies to interview agency personnel, conduct focus groups with participants and youth's parents, and observe program operations, such as volunteer orientation and training. In addition, a telephone survey of Big Brothers and Big Sisters from the eight participating agencies was conducted between March and April 1992. This survey was designed to obtain data about the frequency, content and duration of meetings between adults and youth.

This report documents findings from these data collection efforts. Chapter II describes the BB/BS program model, site selection, and the eight sites participating in the study. Chapter III describes the eight agencies' "pre-match" activities: recruitment, screening and matching of volunteers and youth. Chapter IV focuses on "post-match" activities: the training of volunteers and supervision of pairs; the effects of these activities on the frequency of meetings between volunteers and youth are examined and discussed. Chapter V summarizes BB/BS agencies' program practices and recommends effective practices for the mentoring field.

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<sup>5</sup> While match supervision serves multiple functions, including the detection and resolution of difficulties between youth and their Big Brothers and Big Sisters and the provision of referrals, this study focuses primarily on the extent to which supervision promotes meetings between pairs.

## II. THE NATIONAL MODEL AND THE LOCAL STUDY SITES

The relationship between an unrelated adult and youth, the hallmark of the BB/BS movement, is not established in a vacuum. Behind the hundreds of matches for which each agency is responsible is a professional staff with wide-ranging responsibilities. And undergirding the individual agencies are national standards that provide a level of uniformity in recruitment, screening, training, matching and supervision.

While its standards are reinforced through national training, national and regional conferences and periodic agency evaluations, BB/BSA is not monolithic. Individual agencies adhere to national guidelines, but they are also shaped by the circumstances of the cities and towns in which they are located. Due to this local responsiveness, program practices often vary across the country. The national organization is cognizant of and in agreement with such variation.

This chapter discusses the national standards that guide agency practice and describes the prototypical features of a BB/BS agency. It then describes the eight agencies selected for this study of program implementation, including the demographic characteristics of their youth and volunteers.

### NATIONAL STANDARDS

BB/BSA develops and publishes standards and required procedures governing the screening of volunteers and youth, the creation and supervision of matches, and confidentiality. These requirements represent minimum acceptable program practices, and agencies may interpret them based on philosophy, geography, budget and the needs of the youth they serve. With BB/BSA's approval, agencies may develop equivalent procedures, provided those procedures would be, in the words of BB/BSA's "Equivalency Policy" (as stated in the Standards and Required Procedures for Affiliated Agencies), "equally or more effective in achieving a particular Required Standard."

BB/BSA's most stringent guidelines concern procedures for screening volunteers and supervising matches. Liability issues associated with child sexual abuse are partly responsible for this stringency; limited time for supervision once a match is made further contributes to the need for a concentrated screening effort. The screening process for volunteers includes a written application, background checks, an extensive psycho-social interview and a home assessment. Agency-determined eligibility criteria for volunteers include minimum age and residency requirements, a stable means of financial support, and a means of transportation.

There is also a screening process for youth, which involves a written application, interviews with the parent and child, and a home assessment. Youth's eligibility is deter-



mined based on a number of factors, including age, residence, custody arrangements, level of social skills and overall adjustment.

Agencies emphasize supervision in an effort to facilitate effective matches. National requirements specify that contact must be made with the parent, youth and volunteer within two weeks of the match. Monthly telephone contact with the volunteer is required during the first year of the match, as is monthly contact with the parent and/or youth. The youth must be contacted directly at least four times during the first year. Once the first year of the match has concluded, the requirement for caseworker contact with the participants is reduced to once per quarter.

## ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING OF A BB/BS AGENCY

There are 504 BB/BS agencies throughout the country, with more in the Midwestern than in any other region. Over half of these agencies are found in small to mid-sized cities: in 1989, 60 percent of BB/BS agencies served a population base of less than 200,000.

The United Way is a significant source of funding for these agencies, which also receive government funding and contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals. In addition, they organize community fundraisers, the most popular of which is Bowl For Kids' Sake.

BB/BS agencies maintain regular business hours so that interested persons and participants in matches can easily contact staff with their questions and concerns. All professional staff at BB/BS agencies are college educated, while some staff hold advanced degrees. Agencies employ an executive director/casework supervisor, caseworkers and support staff. The positions of fundraiser, director of volunteer recruitment and program director are common in larger agencies.

Caseworkers, who have bachelor's or master's degrees--typically in social work--are responsible for a variety of tasks, including interviewing volunteers and youth, conducting background checks, and making and supervising matches. In some agencies, they are also called on to organize fundraising campaigns, recruit volunteers, and conduct orientation and training sessions. The extent to which caseworkers are involved in these activities affects the amount of time they have available for making and supervising matches. Frequently, budgetary constraints prevent agencies from hiring staff specifically for the purposes of fundraising and recruitment. Agency board members often play these roles, providing professional experience and expertise at no cost.

Programs have devised creative ways of acquiring additional staff to perform these functions at low cost. Some agencies have hired college students or employed them as interns to monitor older matches that are going smoothly; others have obtained the servic-



es of private-sector employees at no charge. These arrangements permit caseworkers to focus on supervising more difficult matches.

According to 1990 BB/BSA data, 83 percent of all agency staff were female, including 66 percent of the executive directors, 78 percent of casework supervisors and 84 percent of caseworkers. There were also slightly more females than males among matched volunteers: 53 percent of all matched volunteers were women.

Agency staff were predominantly white, particularly at the managerial level. In 1990, 3 percent of the executive directors were black and 4 percent were other minorities. Seven percent of casework supervisors were black and 4 percent were other minorities, while 16 percent of the caseworkers were black and 5 percent were other minorities.

## THE STUDY SITES

From among the entire network of BB/BS agencies, we selected a manageable number to represent the breadth, depth and variety of BB/BS operations. Agency participation in the study was sought through presentations of the research agenda at BB/BSA's national conference, and through an agency survey that requested a detailed profile of philosophy, participants and practices. Site visits were made to 26 agencies, from which 15 were chosen for participation in the four studies. These research sites are listed in Table 1.

As mentioned earlier, not all research sites were targeted for all studies. For example, the impact study includes only agencies with large caseloads so that sufficient numbers of youth could be placed into treatment and control groups. The program practices study includes agencies that are smaller in size as well, so that it better reflects the national BB/BS agency average of 129 active matches. The following criteria were considered in selecting eight sites for the program practices study:

- **Geography**--Sites were selected from all areas of the country for geographic variation.
- **Size**--Agencies with small, mid-sized and large caseloads were included.
- **Combined versus Discrete**--Both combined agencies (those that serve both boys and girls) and discrete agencies (those that serve only boys or only girls) were selected so we could determine whether there are differences in the type of services provided by each.
- **Match Philosophy**--Agencies consider multiple and varied criteria when making matches, including geography, interests, personality and race. Sites were chosen in part because of the criteria they used, so the study could determine whether using specific criteria affected the quality of the match.

**Table 1**  
**BB/BSA RESEARCH SITES**

BB/BS of Alamo Area, Inc.  
San Antonio, Texas

BB/BS of Metropolitan Chicago  
Chicago, Illinois

BB/BS Association of Columbus and Franklin County, Inc.  
Columbus, Ohio

BB/BS of Forsyth County, Inc.  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

BB&S of Houston  
Houston, Texas

BB of Greater Indianapolis  
Indianapolis, Indiana

BS of Central Indiana, Inc.  
Indianapolis, Indiana

BB/BS of Jackson County, Inc.  
Jackson, Michigan

BB/BS of Marin  
San Rafael, California

BB/BS of Greater Minneapolis  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

BB/BS Association of Philadelphia, Inc.  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Community Partners for Youth, Inc.  
Rochester, New York

BB&S of Sedgwick County, Inc.  
Wichita, Kansas

BB&S of Spokane  
Spokane, Washington

Valley BB/BS  
Phoenix, Arizona

- **Other Program Practices**--In addition to matching, agencies were selected to illustrate the range of philosophies regarding recruitment, screening, training and supervision.

In short, variations in program practice were the overriding criteria in the site-selection process, since variations make it possible to test hypotheses about how differences in agency location, size, structure and philosophy affect various measures of the effectiveness of the BB/BS model. Hence, the eight agencies included in this study are not a random sample of all BB/BS sites, nor were they selected to be representative of either the best or the worst that the movement has to offer. The following sites were chosen to participate in the study:

**Big Brothers of Greater Indianapolis** serves the city of Indianapolis and seven surrounding counties. In addition to its headquarters in Indianapolis, the agency operates a satellite office in a northern county that is staffed by a part-time caseworker who shares the space with a caseworker from Big Sisters of Central Indiana. One of two discrete agencies in the study, BB Indy was overseeing 527 matches at the point of data collection.

**Big Sisters of Central Indiana, Inc.** serves the city of Indianapolis and its surrounding counties. This agency staffs two satellite offices: one in a county south of and one to the north of the city that it shares with Big Brothers of Greater Indianapolis. Formed in 1974, it is one of two discrete agencies in the study. Big Sisters of Central Indiana was managing 277 "traditional" matches at the point of data collection.<sup>6</sup>

**Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Jackson County, Inc.** serves the city of Jackson, Michigan, and the surrounding, geographically dispersed, mostly rural, area. All operations take place at the agency's headquarters in Jackson; there are no satellite offices. The current agency was formed with the merger of independent Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations in 1979. The smallest agency in the study, Jackson was overseeing 93 matches at the point of data collection.

**Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Marin** is located in San Rafael, California, and serves all of Marin County. It does not manage any satellite offices. The current agency was formed in 1986, when the county's two discrete Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies merged. At the point of data collection, Marin was overseeing 176 matches.

**Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Minneapolis** serves a five-county region, which includes urban, suburban, and rural areas. At the time of data collection, BB/BS of

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<sup>6</sup> As is the case with several of the agencies in this study, Big Sisters of Central Indiana serves youth in a variety of ways other than through "traditional" matches--that is, in one-to-one relationships with an individual, same-sex adult through the agency's core match program. For the purposes of these site descriptions and the analyses that follow, however, the number of youth served at each agency refers to only those in such matches.

Greater Minneapolis operated two satellite offices in counties to the north and south of the agency's headquarters in Minneapolis. These offices have since closed. The agency was created when the city's Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies merged in 1984. At the point of data collection, Minneapolis was managing 332 "traditional" matches.

**Community Partners for Youth, Inc.** is located in Rochester, New York, and serves a catchment area that includes the city of Rochester and the surrounding area. The agency has considered opening a satellite office because of the considerable distance case-workers must travel to get to the homes of youth and adult volunteers. In operation for 13 years prior to affiliation with BB/BSA in 1982, Community Partners for Youth was formed by the merger of two previously existing United Way agencies. At the point of data collection, Community Partners for Youth was overseeing 573 matches.

**Big Brothers and Sisters of Sedgwick County, Inc.** serves Wichita and its environs. BB&S of Sedgwick County is headquartered in Wichita and oversees a satellite office in an adjacent county. The agency was formed in 1978 when the county's Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies merged. Wichita was managing 692 matches at the point of data collection.

**Big Brothers and Sisters of Spokane** serves all of Spokane County, Washington, including the downtown area, small towns on its periphery and rural farmland. BB&S of Spokane was created when a discrete Big Brothers agency, founded in 1965, added a Big Sisters component in 1977. The agency has no satellite offices. At the point of data collection, Spokane was managing 278 matches.

Table 2 provides condensed information on the study sites, including the number of matches, match commitment, and average length of match for the sites. As the table indicates, these sites represent a range of program practices and philosophies. In subsequent chapters, agencies will be referred to by the letters A through G rather than location.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF YOUTH AND VOLUNTEERS FROM THE STUDY SITES

Table 3 describes the characteristics of matched and waiting list youth from the eight agencies in the study. There were 2,948 matched youth in these sites in FY91. Boys outnumbered girls by a small margin--53 percent to 47 percent. Most matched youth (56 percent) were between the ages of 11 and 15; 31 percent were between five and 10 years old, and 13 percent were between 16 and 18. The majority of matched youth were white (65 percent), while 26 percent were black and 9 percent were of other minority races.

Agencies had 2,033 youth on waiting lists. Boys constituted 67 percent of waiting list youth. However, since some agencies had periods when they closed their waiting list for boys until they could match those who had already been processed, the actual proportion

**Table 2**  
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**  
**ON STUDY SITES**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Combined (C) or Discrete (D) Agency</b>	<b>Match Commitment</b>	<b>Required Meetings Per Month</b>	<b>Average Length of Match (months)</b>	<b>Number of Matches*</b>	<b>Satellite Office(s)</b>
BB of Greater Indianapolis	D	1 Year	2-4	31	527	Yes
BS of Central Indiana, Inc.	D	1 Year	2-4	24	277	Yes
BB/BS of Jackson County, Inc.	C	1 Year	4	32 to 34	93	No
BB/BS of Marin	C	1 Year	3-4	36	176	No
BB/BS of Greater Minneapolis	C	1 Year	4	30 to 36	332	No
Community Partners for Youth, Inc. (Rochester)	C	1 Year or 1 Academic Year	4	24 to 33	573	No
BB&S of Sedgwick County, Inc.	C	1 Year	4	30	692	Yes
BB&S of Spokane	C	1/2 to 1 Year	4	28 to 31	278	No

\* Includes only traditional one-to-one matches.

Source: Agency data collected during site visits.

**Table 3**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MATCHED AND WAITING YOUTH**  
**AT THE EIGHT STUDY SITES**

Characteristic	Matched	Waiting to be matched <sup>a</sup>
<b><u>Race</u></b>		
White	65%	51%
Black	26	35
Hispanic	3	4
Asian	0	1
Native American	2	1
Other	4	4
Unknown	0	4
<b><u>Gender</u></b>		
Male	53%	67%
Female	47	33
<b><u>Age</u></b>		
5-10	31%	47%
11-15	56	48
16-18	13	2
Unknown	0	3

<sup>a</sup>Does not include 744 waiting list youth at Agency G for whom demographic information is not available.

**Note:** The total sample consists of 2,948 matched youth and 2,777 youth waiting to be matched. These numbers include Agency G youth.

Data reflect the number of matches as of either December 31, 1991 or the date of the site visit.

of boys who expressed interest in the program and have not been served is actually higher. Waiting list youth were fairly evenly split between those five to 10 years old (47 percent) and those 11 to 15 years old (48 percent). Fifty-one percent of waiting list youth were white, 35 percent were black, and 10 percent of waiting list youth were of other minority races; the ethnicity of 4 percent of the youth was unknown.

Many of the youth involved in BB/BS programs are at risk, as reflected by a number of indicators. Growing up in a single-parent household is the most common characteristic of matched and waiting list youth, since, with few exceptions, an absent parent is an eligibility criterion. The second most common trait for these youth is growing up in poverty. Staff from seven agencies stated that more than half of the youth they served were poor, defined by household income below the official poverty line or household receipt of AFDC.

While it is common knowledge that many youth who participate in BB/BS activities have absent fathers, the number of children who have experienced more traumatic ordeals is growing. At five of the study agencies, staff reported that in the case of more than half of the youth served, either the client or a family member was a substance abuser. Staff also reported encountering large numbers of children who have been abused physically, sexually or emotionally.

The life circumstances of all youth who participate in BB/BS activities have become more complex. However, agency staff report that waiting list youth are at greater risk and in greater need of services than those who are matched--largely because the serious nature of waiting youth's family problems and personal circumstances affects the willingness of traditional BB/BS volunteers to be matched with them. Not surprisingly, many volunteers often feel they are not equipped to take on such a responsibility or simply prefer to be matched with a youth who is less troubled.

While youth for whom BB/BS services are requested appear to be at greater risk in recent years, volunteer characteristics have not significantly changed. BB/BS agencies continue to rely on middle-class, college-educated whites to serve as volunteers. Table 4 presents the background characteristics of the 3,019 matched volunteers in the eight sites. (The number of volunteers is different from the number of youth due to "couples matches" pairs, where an eligible man and woman are matched with one child.) Eighty-three percent of the volunteers were white, 12 percent were black, and 2 percent were from other minority races. Slightly more than half of all matched volunteers (51 percent) were men.

**Table 4**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF VOLUNTEERS**  
**AT THE EIGHT STUDY SITES**

Characteristic	Matched <sup>a</sup>	Waiting to be matched <sup>b</sup>
<u>Race</u>		
White	83%	79%
Black	12	7
Hispanic	1	1
Other	1	2
Unknown	3	11
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	51%	57%
Female	49	43

<sup>a</sup>Includes volunteers who are matched with two youth, and couples matches.

<sup>b</sup>Does not include data from Agency H, which were unavailable.

Note: The total sample consists of 3,019 matched volunteers and 528 volunteers waiting to be matched.

Data reflect the number of matches as of December 31, 1991 or the date of the site visit.



### III. RECRUITING, SCREENING, AND MATCHING VOLUNTEERS AND YOUTH

If mentoring is to be an effective social policy tool, programs that match adults with youth must identify and attract the numbers and kinds of volunteers they need, and generate and maintain effective relationships between them and the youth who seek these matches. Throughout its nearly 90-year history, BB/BSA has facilitated such relationships through standard procedures in the areas of recruiting, screening, training, matching and supervision.

This chapter explores how participants negotiate the process from initial inquiry to match in the eight study agencies. It describes the process by which adults become Big Brothers or Big Sisters, as well as the youth intake process. It also examines the youth waiting list: who is likely to wait, for how long and why. Finally, it summarizes findings on which components of the process are essential to promoting a successful match and which might be altered to promote efficiency without compromising the safety of the youth served.

#### VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

BB/BS agencies find themselves seeking volunteers in an increasingly competitive environment. Many of the newly emerging mentoring programs seek the same volunteers that BB/BSA continues to recruit: primarily college-educated, middle- and upper-income white men and women. In two of the study cities, Rochester and Minneapolis, a community service ethos strongly supported by the corporate sector makes this competition particularly fierce. In addition, a number of organizations dedicated to matching African-American youth with same-race mentors have appeared on the scene, attempting to recruit the minority volunteers that BB/BSA has historically had trouble attracting in sufficient numbers.

In response to this competition, as well as to the changing needs and demographics of its client population, BB/BSA and its local affiliates have worked to increase the effectiveness of their general volunteer recruitment, and to broaden their appeal to a more diverse group of volunteers. Nevertheless, general recruitment continues to pose a challenge, and targeted recruitment, implemented to increase the race, class and gender diversity of BB/BS volunteers, has met with limited success.

#### Recruitment Strategies

In the study sites, the single most effective recruitment strategy is word of mouth--matched volunteers telling their friends, neighbors and acquaintances how much they enjoy the program and how much the program needs them. It is inexpensive, and because people who step forward have likely heard about program requirements from matched volunteers, they are more likely to anticipate and successfully complete the

screening process. It is also true, however, that a person's negative experience at a BB/BS agency will also be transmitted verbally.

**The Recruitment Challenge!** was devised as a formalized, agencywide means of garnering volunteers via word of mouth. The model for this effort is flexible and can be adjusted to fit individual agency circumstances. At the originating agency, however, **The Challenge!** is an annual competition that typically involves all casework staff as well as board members, matched volunteers and parents of matched youth. Teams are formed by caseload, with the caseworker coordinating the effort, and two or more volunteers chairing the group and making most of the follow-up telephone calls.

Each team member is encouraged to identify two potential volunteers: one who is like themselves, and another who is different. The team that identifies the most eligible volunteers within a certain timeframe wins. A kick-off party, pep rally and prizes all contribute to an atmosphere of involvement, fun and competition that helps to inspire participants and attract eligible volunteers. The agency that created this effort has provided information and technical assistance to other BB/BS agencies seeking recruitment alternatives. Four of the eight study sites have successfully used some adaptation of this strategy to attract volunteers.

The availability of funds notwithstanding, one measure of the importance placed on recruitment at BB/BS agencies is the presence (or absence) of a staff person assigned to that task. While Agency B is the only site to support a full-time recruitment person, four sites (Agencies D, E, F and G) maintain part-time recruitment staff. At Agency A, a recruitment position was cut due to funding limitations. At this agency and Agency C, recruitment responsibilities are divided among casework and executive staff.

In the absence of full-time recruitment staff, caseworkers frequently engage in such activities as setting up tables at community functions, addressing United Way corporate contributors, and speaking at men's and women's group meetings, senior centers and college campuses. At all sites, any agency activity, from a holiday party to an outing in the park, is viewed as a recruitment tool. Any kind of public visibility is considered highly desirable, since it reminds people that the agency operates in the community and needs their help. BB/BSA also contributes recruitment materials to local affiliates, including public service announcements and graphics from well-known artists that are likely to have universal appeal.

According to program staff, potential volunteers' concerns about the time required of a Big Brother or Big Sister continues to hinder recruitment efforts. Adults who would like to volunteer but are reluctant to make substantial time commitments have shied away from BB/BSA--and many of these adults have been successfully courted by the new wave of mentoring programs.

To address this concern, three of the eight study sites (Agencies A, C and E) have modified the weekly contact requirement. In addition, Agencies B and H have reduced the yearlong match commitment, and Agency B has recruited personnel from a local military base to serve as Bigs, even though they may be stationed in the area for less than a year. At Agency H, college students represent a substantial percentage of volunteers and are allowed to commit to an academic year rather than a calendar year.

Sites report that shortening the intensity or length of the match requirement seems to work in attracting populations of potential volunteers who, but for the time element, would be ideal Big Brothers and Big Sisters. According to the match data in Table 5, Agency H ranks among those agencies with the highest matched-to-waiting ratios, and at Agencies C and E, two of the three sites that have relaxed frequency of meeting requirements, matched youth outnumber waiting youth two to one.

### Increasing Diversity

BB/BS agencies generally try to target their recruitment efforts to attract specific populations in an attempt to both increase the number of available Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and introduce a measure of racial and economic diversity that would approximate that of waiting youth.

### Income

BB/BS agencies have traditionally attracted well-educated and middle- or upper-middle-class volunteers. This is not surprising, given the demographics of the nation's volunteer population in general, with individuals who have attended four or more years of college representing the largest proportion of adult volunteers, and the percentage of whites who volunteer nearly twice that of African Americans (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). As BB/BS agencies continue to attract this population, however, potential volunteers who are less wealthy but may be equally effective remain an untapped resource.

The character of these volunteer demographics has generated misconceptions about what the program is and who is qualified to participate. BB/BS agencies have had limited success in dispelling these myths. At Agency D, a site that has had some success recruiting atypical volunteers--i.e., those who are less educated or less well-off financially than the average volunteer--care has been taken to portray the role of the volunteer as "friend" rather than "role model" in an attempt to dispel preconceived notions of mentors as wealthy or highly educated. This agency courts working-class volunteers precisely because they can "understand what the kid is going through."

This philosophy echoes findings reported by Freedman (1992), who, in his study of intergenerational mentoring programs, described effective older mentors as people who:

**Table 5**  
**MATCHED-TO-WAITING RATIOS BY SITE**

Agency Designation	Matched	Waiting	Matched-to-Waiting Ratio
A	176	119	1 : 0.7
B	278	291	1 : 1.0
C	527	260	1 : 0.5
D	93	63	1 : 0.7
E	277	101	1 : 0.4
F	692	842	1 : 1.2
G	332	744	1 : 2.2
H	573	357	1 : 0.6
All Agencies	2,948	2,777	1 : 0.9

. . . were themselves individuals who not only had no prior experience in the mentoring role but were actually quite different from those we commonly think of as good mentors--"successful" people, leaders in the community, financially secure executives and other "good role models."

Lower-income adults may also hesitate to apply because they assume that being a Big Brother or Big Sister requires them to spend a lot of money. All the agencies in this study emphasize the relatively cost-free nature of the commitment. The fact that the volunteer "is not Santa Claus" is reiterated through the orientation and interview, at the match meeting and with the parent and youth. Most agencies provide complimentary tickets to shows and sporting events, sponsor picnics and parties, and urge volunteers to engage in free activities with their youth. According to BB/BSA's historian, "Volunteers are expected to include their matches in routine work and leisure activities. Elaborate, costly pursuits are discouraged" (Beiswinger, 1985).

### Race

All the study sites use some combination of targeted recruitment strategies that may include advertising on black-owned radio, speaking at black churches, men's clubs and senior citizens centers, publishing articles in various local and neighborhood newspapers, and posting flyers on college campuses.

Agencies that recruit in minority communities have had mixed success. Seven of the eight study sites spend varying amounts of time and resources engaged in similar targeted minority recruitment efforts (working with black fraternities, visiting black churches, advertising on radio stations whose listeners are predominantly African Americans, etc.). All meet with limited success, as illustrated in Table 6, which shows the percentage of matched minority volunteers at each of the study sites. At three of the agencies, people of color make up 6 percent or less of matched volunteers; at the other five, minority volunteers comprise no more than 20 percent of the total number matched. Meanwhile, the percentage of minority youth ranges from 12 to 43 percent across sites, and is more than 30 percent at six sites.

The eighth study site, Agency B, does include portrayals of minority volunteers in its general recruitment literature and advertising materials, but does not actively target specific groups in the ways mentioned above. Because the city within which it operates is predominantly white (93%) and minority youth comprise just 12 percent of both those waiting and those matched, Agency B has not invested in a targeted recruitment effort. As a result, only 4 percent of its matched volunteers are people of color, the lowest percentage of any study site.

Along with Agency B, six other agencies in the study reported that they were perceived to be "white agencies" within their communities. This is not surprising, given that all of

**Table 6**  
**MINORITY RECRUITMENT BY SITE**

Agency Designation	Target Minorities	Percentage of Matched Volunteers Who are Minority	Percentage of Matched Youth Who are Minority	Minority Board President?	Minority Staff/ Volunteers Who Recruit?
A	Y	6%	30%	N	N
B	N	4	12	N	N
C	Y	16	38	Y	Y
D	Y	5	19	N	N
E	Y	16	39	N	Y
F	Y	16	43	N	Y
G	Y	7	43	N	Y
H	Y	20	33	Y	Y

the study agencies have white executive directors, and three are staffed entirely by whites.

In fact, an agency's racial composition at both the local board and staff levels appears to correlate with its capacity to recruit minority volunteers. (See also BB/BSA's Pass It On Volunteer Recruitment Manual, 1992.) The sites with the largest percentages of minority volunteers are those with black board presidents and/or black caseworkers who are responsible, in part, for minority recruitment.<sup>7</sup> Of these five sites, two have part-time recruitment people on staff. It appears, then, that in terms of minority recruitment, it is as important to have visible minority individuals on staff as it is to have a full-time recruitment and/or public relations person.

Table 6 illustrates the relationship between the presence of minority staff and the extent to which volunteers are people of color. As the table shows, the percentage of matched minority volunteers at four of the agencies where minority staff assist or are responsible for minority recruitment is at least twice that of minority volunteers at agencies where this is not the case. At Agency C, black volunteers and white volunteers matched with black youth have convened a group that meets regularly to devise new strategies to attract black volunteers to the agency.

This agency (whose board president is black) is among the most successful minority recruiters in the study.

### Gender

BB/BSA and most of its affiliates have focused much of their effort on recruiting men in response to the large number of waiting boys, who traditionally outnumber waiting girls. Although this has not affected the capacity of BB/BS agencies to recruit women or match girls, it has directed recruitment efforts primarily toward men rather than women. Because materials developed by BB/BSA headquarters tend to focus overwhelmingly on male recruitment,<sup>8</sup> discrete Big Sisters agencies, including the one in this study, must develop recruitment materials locally, which requires greater time, effort and resources.

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<sup>7</sup> Two of the eight study sites (Agencies C and H) have black board presidents. (Although at the time of data collection the board president at Agency H was a white male, an African-American female has since taken the helm. Agency H also evolved from the merger of two existing United Way agencies, one of which focused its efforts on African-American individuals, which provides a historical basis, as well, for the agency's positive reputation within the African-American community.) These sites have among the highest percentages of minority volunteers, with 16 percent at Agency C and 20 percent at Agency H.

<sup>8</sup> BB/BSA has produced some recruitment materials specifically for use by local agencies in recruiting female volunteers, the most familiar being the series of posters generated in collaboration with Harlequin Enterprises Limited. Nonetheless, agencies tend to focus their recruitment efforts on men, who are typically more difficult to attract than women.

The recruitment efforts that Big Sisters agencies undertake do generate interest among parents with daughters who would benefit from the program, and women who are interested in volunteering. At agencies that serve both boys and girls, however, parents may be less likely to request Big Sisters for their daughters, since the advertisements they see typically do not emphasize the fact that the agency serves both sexes.

## SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

Even if agencies succeed in overcoming recruitment obstacles, they still must move potential volunteers through an intake process that is long, arduous and often personally invasive. This section describes how volunteers and youth are processed prior to the match, the national policies that guide that process, and the variations across study sites.

The BB/BS volunteer screening process serves a number of purposes. In addition to determining whether a volunteer is qualified to become a Big Brother or Big Sister, it allows casework staff to get to know the applicants, which contributes to more effective matchmaking. It also provides opportunities for agencies to make explicit their expectations of the volunteers, and for volunteers to decide whether they can meet those expectations. It promotes parent confidence in the program by demonstrating concern for the safety of their children, and protects the program against litigation. Moreover, the volunteer screening process protects the children that BB/BS agencies serve.

No component of program practice is more closely regulated by BB/BSA than volunteer screening; there are 11 required procedures and several more recommendations that guide the process (BB/BSA Program Management Manual, 1988). Screening out possible child abusers--particularly sexual abusers--is a major goal of these procedures.

In addition to required screening procedures, BB/BSA regularly schedules training sessions at BB/BSA's annual national conference that teach agencies to deal specifically with identifying and responding to incidents of abuse that occur within matches. These sessions are very well attended. To limit the damage on those rare occasions when a volunteer does molest a child, BB/BSA has published a comprehensive guide about managing such crises.

Volunteer screening elements required by BB/BSA include a written application that requests demographic information and an in-person psychosocial interview. An "assessment of the volunteer's home environment" is also required, though agencies may determine whether this includes an actual visit to the volunteer's home. All of the agencies require references from individuals not related to the volunteer, as well as arrest and conviction records from local, state and/or national law enforcement agencies. Agencies also screen volunteers through their state child abuse registries where available. The order and timing of these process elements vary by site, as do setting and staffing.



The screening process typically takes from one to three months to complete. While police checks and personal references, a home visit or its equivalent, and an interview during which agency expectations, demographic information, interests, time availability and other practical issues are discussed all seem appropriate and necessary, the psycho-social interview--which takes upward of four hours to complete--was considered overly invasive by P/PV researchers as well as by many of the volunteers interviewed.

Volunteers are asked about behaviors and events that most people typically do not easily divulge--particularly to strangers. For example, caseworkers question volunteers about their sexual histories and experiences, their relationships with family members, and their mental health and work histories. Most volunteers interviewed for this study recalled being taken aback by the intensely personal nature of the interview, but many hastened to add that they felt this type of information was needed to effectively screen and match volunteers. Missing, however, are the views of potential volunteers who may have been deterred by the intensely personal nature of this process.

One personal area of inquiry included in the psycho-social interview at all the study sites is the applicant's sexual orientation. At Agencies C and F, informing the interviewer that one is gay or lesbian results in immediate rejection. At the remaining sites, the information is used in much the same way as race, religion or interests: as a criterion of which the parent and youth are made aware during the matching process.

While many caseworkers believe that this interview provides impressions and information that make important contributions to screening and match decisions, it was not evident how much of this information is routinely used in making these decisions or whether such benefits outweigh the damage that could result from deterring applicants or alienating volunteers already in the pipeline.

Aspects of the screening process other than the psycho-social interview also add to its length. At Agencies G and H, the pre-match training session is used as a screening tool, and a certain amount of training time is required before a volunteer is accepted into or rejected from the program. As a result, volunteers at these agencies who are slow to attend training sessions take longer to process. Rather than use training as a screening tool, the other six study sites either provide it after acceptance into the program, or do not require it at all. By restricting training to matchable volunteers, time is not squandered training those who will eventually be screened out.

Police checks also tend to delay the process, but are strictly mandated by BB/BSA. Therefore, on receiving a volunteer's application, agencies typically send in these requests immediately. Some agencies (A, E and G) are charged for this service, and pass that expense along to the volunteer in the form of a nominal (from \$5 to \$25) processing fee.

Personal references, a component also required by BB/BSA, can also slow the process. Since references are typically not returned in a timely fashion, they can delay the acceptance/rejection step significantly. Agencies F and H have remedied this problem by accepting "verbal" references over the phone, thus expediting the process without sacrificing its usefulness.

Another time-consuming screening component, used at two of the study sites, is the paper-and-pencil psychological test. At Agency G, volunteers complete the 16PF that is required by the agency's insurance carrier. At Agency B, a volunteer will occasionally be asked to complete the MMPI when concern about some aspect of her/his personality persists among casework staff.

In response to concerns about the length of the screening process, BB/BS agencies have begun to make adjustments where practicable. Many BB/BS agencies have in place a mechanism by which volunteers may take themselves out of the process before the agency invests the time and money necessary to conduct it. "Hard" screening requirements--i.e., nonnegotiable requirements--are typically listed on a form included with application materials distributed by the agency. These requirements help volunteers determine whether they should continue with the application process or withdraw, thus saving the program valuable screening time.

Although the time-consuming and invasive nature of the screening process may deter some volunteers from applying and may frustrate those who have applied and want to be matched immediately, its length does not appear to affect the ratio of waiting to matched youth at the eight study sites. In fact, the ratios for sites whose volunteer intake requires about three months and sites where it requires approximately a month are comparable. However, there are only limited data on the percentage of volunteers who successfully navigate the intake process relative to the percentage who contact the agency but screen themselves out. The volunteer applicant pool study will begin to answer questions about the experience of these and other volunteers during the screening process. Those findings will be published in a subsequent report.

#### THE YOUTH: WHO THEY ARE AND HOW LONG THEY WAIT

BB/BS agencies are not designed to assist all youth in a given community. Eligibility requirements for youth typically include age and an absent parent--for boys, it must be the father; for girls, it may be either parent. Individual agencies determine other eligibility requirements. At discrete Big Sisters agencies, services are provided to girls based on need, not family composition. Therefore--as a function of agency philosophy--an absent parent is not an eligibility requirement.

Six of the eight study sites turn away few youth, rejecting only those for whom another community agency is better suited (e.g., youth with severe emotional problems or physical disabilities, or for whom a one-to-one match is deemed inappropriate). Using net-

works they have established, caseworkers contact other agencies to obtain assistance for such youth.

The other study sites (Agencies B and C) are particularly restrictive in determining which youth are eligible for services. Agency B will "only occasionally" serve youth with serious problems--e.g., substance abuse, teen pregnancy, involvement in the juvenile justice system, mental health problems, and learning or physical disabilities. These youth are typically referred to "appropriate service providers in the community." At Agency C, youth who are alcohol or drug dependent, blind, deaf or severely handicapped are ineligible for service, as are youth who have not lived in the same residence for at least a year, or whose mothers plan to marry within the next year.

Clearly, most BB/BS agencies tend to screen out high-risk youth. Even when such youth are accepted, they are often not placed in "traditional" matches. Some agencies have expanded their programming specifically to address certain populations. For example, Agencies D and E provide one-to-one matches for pregnant teens. Agencies D and H have special programs that deal specifically with adjudicated youth. In fact, Agency H has contracted with the Department of Social Services for a part-time case manager to handle matches with youth who are under the protection of the department. The volunteers involved in these programs receive different training and often receive greater supervision than traditional volunteers.

BB/BS has a level of parental engagement not found in any of the other mentoring programs P/PV has studied. In spite of the increasing pool of at-risk youth seeking their services, most youth are still referred to BB/BS agencies by a parent or guardian. Even for the 5 to 40 percent of referrals that are made by other agencies, the parent/guardian is required to complete and sign the application on the youth's behalf and participate in an interview with the child. Moreover, the parent/guardian's preferences are considered along with the youth's when the match is being made.

Prior to being matched, youth must participate in orientation/training that involves a review of agency policy and practice as well as a discussion of how long the youth is likely to wait. In addition, EMPOWER, a BB/BSA-developed child sexual abuse education and prevention program, is required by Agencies B, D and F before the match, and by Agencies C and E within the first six months of the match. Agency H presents EMPOWER information at the volunteer training session and emphasizes at the match meeting that match participants are obligated to report any abuse, neglect or molestation of the child. EMPOWER is often the first opportunity parents have to interact with the agency, even though it deals with a sensitive subject, and is considered essential by all but two sites. Combined with rigorous volunteer screening, EMPOWER helps to protect the youth as a member of a BB/BS match, and more generally within the community.

Once the screening process is completed, the child is placed on the waiting list. In this list, there are often several categories of youth either in process or ready to be matched.

Finding volunteers who are willing and able to be matched with these youth continues to be a challenge.

One measure of the need for Big Brothers and Big Sisters--and the capacity of BB/BS agencies to meet this need--is reflected in the number of children waiting to be matched. However, agency waiting lists may underestimate the demand for BB/BS services. As illustrated earlier in this chapter, agencies exercise considerable latitude in determining whom they will serve. In an attempt to maintain their waiting lists so that the youth who are on them have a realistic chance of being matched, BB/BS agencies strategically manage youth intake.

Youth intake strategies commonly taken to control the waiting list (Table 7) include narrowing eligibility requirements, limiting the time that youth can spend on the waiting list, and closing intake to certain groups (typically boys) until those who are waiting can be processed and matched. Some agencies have devised multitiered waiting lists, separating those who have applied and/or are being processed from those who are ready to be matched. Regular purges of waiting lists are also conducted so that youth who either are no longer interested, have moved, or have turned 18 and thus aged out of the process are not counted among those seeking Big Brothers or Big Sisters.

In addition to employing strategies that limit the number of youth on the waiting lists, agencies have also tried to make the waiting lists more vivid for potential volunteers by focusing on individual youth who are waiting for a Big. One study site (Agency C) uses profiles of waiting youth as a means of personalizing the recruitment effort.

Waiting list management strategies notwithstanding, the aggregate numbers continue to suggest that agencies do not have the capacity to match expeditiously all the youth who meet the eligibility criteria and request their services. At the eight study sites, there were 2,948 matched youth and 2,777 youth waiting to be matched in FY91--i.e., almost one youth waiting to be matched for every youth who was being served.

The length of time spent on agency waiting lists also reflects the extent to which the needs of certain subpopulations of waiting youth remain unmet. Across the study sites, boys tend to wait longer to be matched (usually one to two years--and sometimes up to four years) than girls (who wait, on average, about three to six months). Regardless of gender, younger clients tend to get matched sooner, with younger girls typically matched most quickly. Minority youth also tend to wait longer to be matched than nonminority youth.

Table 8 presents waiting list size by agency and gender. It clearly shows that every site has found boys more difficult to match than girls. The matched-to-waiting ratio for boys in the eight sites is 1:1.2; that is, for every 100 boys already matched with a Big Brother, there are 120 on the agencies' waiting lists.

**Table 7**  
**WAITING LIST MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES BY SITE**

Agency Designations	Ever Closed Wait List	Multitiered Wait List	Narrowed Eligibility	Limited Time On Waiting List
A				
B				
C	X	X	X	
D		X		
E				X
F	X	X		
G	X	X		
H				

**Table 8**  
**MATCHED-TO-WAITING RATIOS BY GENDER**

Agency Designation	Girls			Boys		
	Matched	Waiting	Matched-to- Waiting Ratio	Matched	Waiting	Matched-to- Waiting Ratio
A	85	41	1 : 0.5	91	78	1 : 0.9
B	130	100	1 : 0.8	148	191	1 : 1.3
C	--	--	--	527	260	1 : 0.5
D	56	30	1 : 0.5	37	33	1 : 0.9
E	277	101	1 : 0.4	--	--	--
F	324	316	1 : 1.0	368	526	1 : 1.4
G	208	277	1 : 1.3	124	467	1 : 3.8
H	304	87	1 : 0.3	269	270	1 : 1.0

There is considerable site-level variation in this measure, however. In three of the agencies--Agencies A, C and D--the waiting list is smaller than the list of boys who have already been matched. At the other end of the spectrum, Agency G has 380 boys waiting for every 100 matched.

The matched-to-waiting ratio for girls is 1:0.7; that is, for every 100 girls who already have a Big Sister, there are 70 girls on agency records waiting for one. This finding is fairly consistent across the seven agencies serving girls--in only one, Agency G, does the number of girls on the waiting list exceed the number already matched.

Table 9 presents waiting list size by agency and minority status. It shows that the study agencies have found minority youth more difficult to match than white youth. While there are only 65 white youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched, there are 100 minority youth waiting for every 100 matched. This situation is further exacerbated for minority males; for every 100 matched, 133 are waiting to be matched. There are some site variations worth noting in these data: at Agencies C and E, for instance, the number of minority youth on the waiting list is much smaller than the number matched.

## THE MATCH PROCESS

Few objective rules can be consistently applied across all programs and participants governing how mentors and youth are most effectively paired. Initially, practitioners, in an attempt to capture what occurs "naturally" between interested adults and youth seeking guidance, did not **make** matches so much as facilitate the possibility that pairings would occur. It was assumed that youth and adults would gravitate toward each other during programmatically facilitated group activities--matching themselves, as it were--with little or no "interference" from practitioners. In some instances, and in some non-BB/BS mentoring programs, this remains the general matching procedure. At BB/BS agencies, however, program staff continue to play an active role in pairing adults and youth.

Matches are made across several dimensions, depending on program goals, youth needs and volunteer capabilities. BB/BSA, aware that both objective and subjective criteria inform match-making, has deliberately granted its member agencies latitude to fashion the process in a way that best suits the needs of youth, the abilities of volunteers and the capacity of program staff.

BB/BSA's "Standards and Required Procedures for Affiliated Agencies," appended to BB/BSA's Program Management Manual (1988), state that "The agency shall determine an appropriate match based upon the volunteer's ability to help meet the needs of the client." In short, how the match is made is left to the individual affiliates.

Still, with the help of broadly defined guidelines, agencies have developed matching processes that are remarkably similar in spite of the different philosophies that drive

**Table 9**  
**MATCHED-TO-WAITING**  
**RATIOS BY MINORITY STATUS**

Agency Designation	Minorities			Non Minorities		
	Matched	Waiting	Matched-to-Waiting Ratio	Matched	Waiting	Matched-to-Waiting Ratio
A	52	48	1 : 0.9	124	71	1 : 0.6
B	33	34	1 : 1.0	245	257	1 : 1.0
C	198	127	1 : 0.6	329	133	1 : 0.4
D	18	20	1 : 1.0	75	43	1 : 0.6
E	109	45	1 : 0.4	168	56	1 : 0.3
F	294	413	1 : 1.4	398	429	1 : 1.1
G <sup>a</sup>	142	NA	NA	190	NA	NA
H	188	231	1 : 1.2	385	126	1 : 0.3
All Agencies <sup>b</sup>	892	918	1 : 1.0	1,724	1,115	1 : 0.6

<sup>a</sup>Data indicating minority and nonminority status of waiting youth at Agency G are unavailable.

<sup>b</sup>Excludes Agency G.



their work and the different contexts within which they operate. In making matches, all agencies in the study consider practical factors, such as gender, geographic proximity and availability. In addition, volunteers, youth and parents are asked to state their match preferences. Volunteers indicate the types of youth they would like to be matched with, noting demographic features, such as race and age, and the types of activities (sports, travel, music, etc.) they expect to engage in with the youth. They are also asked whether they would be comfortable being matched with youth who have been abused or live in chaotic households. Youth and their parents also state their preferences for volunteers, noting such factors as age, race and religious affiliation. Youth also express their preferences for activities.

The practice of identifying and following youth interests and preferences has been hypothesized to contribute to the development of effective relationships as well as to prevent youth from "voting with their feet"--that is, failing to show up for meetings or withdrawing from the relationship altogether. And research does indicate that matches made with both the youth's and volunteers' preferences in mind tend to result in relationships that are more likely to promote both pair members' satisfaction (Styles and Morrow, 1992). Because BB/BSA has in place a process that has been found to contribute to effective relationships elsewhere, other mentoring programs would do well to follow its example.

Other aspects of the match process differ slightly across BB/BS agencies. Among the eight study sites, for example, there were contrasting philosophies on how the selection process should proceed. Although all agencies agree that the volunteer should accept the match before the parent and youth are contacted, Agencies A, E and G assign an individual youth to each volunteer, while the remainder allow the volunteer to choose from among three youth. At sites where the caseworker assigns a single youth to the volunteer, staff feel that the screening process and the caseworker's knowledge of the prospective match participants' interests and preferences are sufficiently thorough. The volunteer has the right to reject the match, which safeguards this process. Agencies that offer several youth from whom a volunteer may select a Little Brother or Little Sister believe that by offering this choice, they are fostering a sense of ownership and control over the process that will ultimately be beneficial to the match. One caseworker contended that if the volunteer were not given a choice, "the success rate would be terrible."

Regardless of whom the volunteer chooses (or whom she or he is assigned to), the parent/guardian has the ultimate responsibility for accepting or rejecting the match. The parent/guardian rarely rejects a proposed match. At all study sites, in fact, the volunteer is more likely than the parent to reject a potential match. In large part, this is due to the fact that the youth has often been waiting to be matched a considerable length of time. As a result, a parent may agree to a match that does not entirely reflect her/his expectations or those of her/his child. It is not uncommon for parents and youth to broaden their preferences (or, in some cases, abandon them entirely) in order to increase their chances of obtaining a volunteer within a reasonable period of time.

One dimension that is often compromised in this way is that of race, particularly in the case of minority boys who seek same-race Big Brothers. The shortage of minority men who apply to the program--relative to the number of minority boys who apply--often requires that minority boys agree to a cross-race match or risk a longer wait. Faced with this choice, mothers often permit their sons to be matched with men of other races, despite an initial preference for a same-race volunteer.

Other factors external to the match can also affect the match process. For example, parents often bring more than one child to BB/BS agencies to obtain a Big Brother or Big Sister, and caseworkers generally attempt to match siblings at roughly the same time in order to avoid disrupting life at home and within matches. When a sister and brother are to be matched, however, circumstances can conspire against the brother, because there are generally more boys than girls waiting to be matched.

How agency staff conduct the match process is also important. Although no caseworker at the BB/BS study agencies makes matches in isolation, there are varying degrees of interaction among staff during the process. Caseworkers from Agencies A, D, E, F and G meet regularly as a group to share information about waiting youth and eligible volunteers, but caseworkers at the remaining sites (Agencies B, C and H) informally collaborate with colleagues and supervisors, asking for input and giving suggestions.

Agency E employs a highly structured process: a numerical rating scale that reflects both the youth's level of need and the volunteer's skill level. When the caseworkers meet, they exchange cards that are numbered to reflect the level of youth need and the volunteer's capacity to meet that need. Matches are made according to these numbers.

At the two smallest agencies in the study, Agencies A and D, caseworkers are familiar with all the youth waiting to be matched, and meet as a group to make matches. In contrast, caseworkers at larger sites are assigned a small number of waiting list youth, typically according to zip code, for whom they are responsible. Even in these sites, however, no caseworker makes matches in isolation. As a result, a system of "checks and balances" is in place that contributes to matching objectivity.

The initial match meeting, also an important feature of the matching process, is attended by the youth, volunteer and caseworker, as well as the parent. It typically takes place at the youth's home, though it also may occur at the BB/BS agency office. The parent attends this meeting to be introduced to the volunteer and to express expectations for the match. At some agencies, the parent's presence at the match meeting is intended to represent the extent to which the parent is a match participant; at others, it simply indicates that the parent will not be a match barrier.

At the initial match meeting, most sites have the pairs set goals for the match. Agencies A, C, E, F and G have formalized this goal-setting process. At Agency B, match participants sign a contract, receive ID cards and discuss what they hope to do together once

the match is under way. At Agency H, the volunteer and caseworker determine goals and objectives prior to the match meeting. Agency D specifically avoids using "goal-setting" terminology at this meeting so that unrealistic expectations are not encouraged.

BB/BSA affiliates are granted broad latitude in conducting the match process; still, the process appears to be more systemized than at many other adult/youth relationships programs. For example, at one CPIL site and at least one Linking Lifetimes site, matches are made "naturally," as youth and adults seek out each other during planned group sessions. Whereas BB/BS staff collaborate, staff at other programs often make matches without the benefit of peer or supervisor collaboration.

Parents take a more active part in the BB/BS process, from intake through the life of the match, than they do in the other programs P/PV has studied, with the exception of one CPIL site. In fact, parent involvement is not considered a goal of CPIL. At the juvenile justice project sites, youth are wards of the state; thus, parents are not required to give consent, nor to attend the match meeting, though they are encouraged to do so. Their nonparticipation does not preclude youth eligibility. However, incidental contact does occur between mentors and parents at the institution during regular visiting hours, when both parties are likely to be there.

## SUMMARY

Although other mentoring programs have emerged during the past decade, BB/BSA dominates the field. Youth and their parents continue to apply in substantial numbers despite the knowledge that they may wait several years to be matched--or that they may not be matched at all. The elements of program practice described in this chapter--recruitment, screening and matching--greatly influence how long youth wait, when (and whether) they will be matched, and with whom.

While it is not possible to predict outcomes by examining how matches are made, critical factors that are likely to contribute to match success can be identified--such as considering youth preferences. While objective matchmaking criteria are easily translated from program to program, the subjective part of the process is not. This does not mean the subjective piece is any less relevant, but it is certainly less amenable to measurement and replication.

Recruiting sufficient numbers of volunteers continues to present a challenge for BB/BS agencies. While these agencies have experienced some success in garnering white, middle-class volunteers--as is evidenced by the thousands of youth across the country who are matched each year--agencies continue to have difficulty attracting enough minority volunteers and male volunteers of all races.

Attempts to diversify the pool of eligible volunteers by targeting specific groups (mainly minority men and women) have met with limited success. Agencies in the study whose

minority staff and/or board members are engaged in specific minority recruitment efforts have been able to attract greater proportions of minority volunteers than have agencies staffed entirely by whites.

As important as attracting volunteers is screening them to determine their eligibility. This is done through a screening process that also provides caseworkers with valuable information about volunteers that can be used in making matches, and conveys agency expectations and requirements to potential Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Volunteer screening also protects the children served by BB/BS agencies.

Screening is a sensible program component that determines volunteer fitness, guides matchmaking and informs supervision, but one aspect of it, the psycho-social interview, is problematic. While the interview is often considered essential from a casework perspective, its nature (invasive) and duration (lengthy) may dissuade some otherwise capable volunteers from applying or convince others to abandon the process in midstream. In addition, some of the expectations that it conveys are limiting.

The length of the match commitment, typically a year, excludes those who plan to reside in the community for a limited period and might be a dissuasive factor for many potential volunteers. Two sites in this study that have experimented with a shorter time commitment have attracted and successfully matched students and military personnel who would otherwise have been prevented from volunteering.

While a change in the match duration requirement has garnered applications from previously ineligible volunteers, it is less clear whether a change in required meeting frequency would attract volunteers who would otherwise not apply. While the data are not currently available to determine whether more volunteers are applying to become Big Brothers and Big Sisters at the three sites that have decreased the meeting frequency requirement, we hypothesize that the adjusted meeting requirement eliminates a significant barrier to participation for those who would like to apply but whose time is limited. In fact, at these sites, the matched-to-waiting ratios are among the best in the study.

In contrast to the screening process, which is highly regulated by BB/BSA, matching includes subjective elements that are less amenable to evaluation. The practical aspects of the matching process include, as often as possible, the pairing of an eligible adult and a youth who share interests and live close enough to facilitate consistent contact and provide a solid foundation for the match.

Apart from the use of these objective criteria, few hard and fast rules apply. One strategy that does set the BB/BS matching process apart from that of most other mentoring programs, however, is the consideration of the youth's, parents' and volunteers' preferences and interests during matchmaking. Given the effectiveness of youth-driven matches (Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992), this strategy seems positive. Not only do youth remain in matches where their preferences influence

decisions about the types of activities the pair will undertake, such matches have been shown to develop into effective relationships that are satisfying for both the adult volunteer and the youth.

Once a match is made, it requires programmatic support to grow and flourish. For the match to work, the pair must meet. Match supervision facilitates this contact, and is discussed in the next chapter.



## IV. SUPPORTING THE MATCH

This chapter focuses on what occurs after the match has been made--those policies and procedures that support the development of a relationship between an adult and a youth. Special attention is given to training and supervision, and their effect on the rate of interaction occurring between the match participants.

Two methodologies are employed: the first involves comparing and contrasting the effect of the different strategies employed by the eight BB/BS sites. Similar comparisons are made between these practices and those of the other mentoring programs evaluated as part of P/PV's adult/youth relationships agenda--CPIL, Linking Lifetimes, and the Atlanta and St. Louis juvenile justice project sites that match adjudicated youth with mentors in an institutional setting.

### ADULT/YOUTH INTERACTION

Relationships represent a unique social intervention. They involve not an income transfer, nor hours of instruction or training--the common currency of social intervention programs--but instead the human interactions that take place when matched pairs meet. While the fact that meetings take place does not, in and of itself, signify that an effective intervention is being delivered, meetings are a necessary precondition of effective relationships. Subsequent reports will analyze the extent to which meaningful relationships have been formed between the youth and their Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and whether those relationships have resulted in positive outcomes for the youth. This report asks whether the appropriate groundwork has been laid.

To get a more accurate look at the extent to which meetings were taking place than was possible through review of program records alone, randomly selected volunteers from the eight participating sites were surveyed in March and April 1992. At the two largest sites, 175 volunteers in active matches were selected as respondents. At five others, 150 volunteers were selected. In the other site, volunteers totaled scarcely more than 100 and were all taken into the sample. After excluding from the analysis those volunteers who, contrary to program records, were no longer matched with their Little Brothers or Little Sisters and the small number in cross-gender matches or couples matches, a sample of 821 volunteers resulted.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Of 821 phone survey respondents, 441 (54%) are women and 380 (46%) are men. Of the 818 volunteers who reported their race, 94 (11.5%) are minorities and 724 (88.5%) are white. Of the 818 youth for whom race was reported, 302 (36.9%) are minorities and 519 (63.1%) are white. For all youth, 580 (71%) are in same-race matches and 241 (29%) are in cross-race matches. For minority youth, 71 (24%) are in same-race matches and 231 (76%) are in cross-race matches. Differences in percentages between the telephone survey figures and the program records data reported earlier are due in part to the interval between the receipt of these data from the study sites and the completion of the telephone interviews.

It is important to stress that respondents to this survey did not attempt to summarize the amount of interaction that occurred throughout an entire relationship, but the interaction taking place within a randomly chosen period within that relationship. Respondents were asked to describe the pattern of interaction occurring between them and their Little Brothers or Little Sisters over the preceding four-week period.

While the four-week period inquired about cannot be said to be typical, it is theoretically no more atypical than any other four-week period that might have been chosen. Had the survey been conducted in June or July, for instance, there might have been more interaction since youth would have been out of school; conversely, however, there might have been less interaction because of volunteers' own vacations. Had the survey been conducted during the holidays, there might have been less interaction because both volunteers and youth were more involved with their own families. However, if a pair made sure that they saw each other over the holidays, one might have observed more interaction. Given these unknowns, these data fairly represent the amount of interaction occurring between the adult volunteers and their Little Brothers or Little Sisters within a given four-week period.

Not only is the period chosen thought to be as typical as any other, there is also no reason to believe that its timing has a differential effect on the program practices or match characteristics variables whose effects are examined later. That is, even if March were somehow more atypical than any other period that could have been chosen, it is likely to be equally atypical for youth in both same-race and cross-race matches or sites that supervise by phone or in face-to-face meetings.

### Measures of Interaction

The survey elicited a number of measures of volunteers' interactions with the youth with whom they had been paired--how long they had been matched; whether they had met at all in the past four weeks; if not, why they had not; and, if so, how often they had met within that period. Each of these measures indicates something different about the extent to which youth are receiving the intervention for which they and their parents came to the BB/BS agency.

The first of these measures, the **match's longevity**, provides the data with which to examine an issue of specific policy relevance to BB/BSA--whether to continue the practice of maintaining very long-term matches when they occur, or to reassign experienced volunteers to youth on the waiting list.

The second--**whether meetings occur**--indicates whether, given four weeks to do so, volunteers and youth meet at all. Over a period in which volunteers are expected to meet with their charges between two and four times for a minimum of three hours each, matches who fail to meet stand out.



The frequency of meetings over the four-week period provides an additional measure of the intensity of the intervention, as does the number of hours spent in those interactions. Both measures of the frequency of meeting are important: unless the pairs meet, the intervention cannot have its hypothesized benefits. Moreover, higher levels of participation are likely to result in stronger outcomes.

One should keep in mind that as insightful as they may prove to be, these measures are at best only partial indicators of local agency effectiveness in creating constructive and meaningful relationships. They indicate the extent to which the program has been able to get the parties together initially, and to support their continued interaction. However, until additional data are available--from in-depth interviews with the volunteers and youth, as well as from the impact analysis--these measures stand as no more, but no less, than the best available proxy.

### Rates of Interaction

The survey proved revealing in two regards--it demonstrates both the extraordinary longevity of BB/BS matches, and the extraordinarily high rate of interaction occurring between Big Brothers and Big Sisters and their charges. They are each discussed in turn.

### Longevity

In the social policy arena, there are far too many short-term interventions with long-term aims--programs that last for six weeks or a semester, yet are expected to effect changes that will last a lifetime. The BB/BS model, in contrast, fosters long-term contact. While they are asked to make a commitment for a minimum of a year, large numbers of Big Brothers and Big Sisters form relationships with their assigned youth that last much longer.

On average, the volunteers in the sample had been paired with their current Little Brother or Little Sister for 27.9 months: 28 months for Big Brother matches and 27.4 months for Big Sister matches. The range in the length of these matches was wide. At the lower end, some matches were only two months old; at the upper end, several were more than 13 years old. For analysis purposes, they were grouped into the following categories: those matches that had lasted a year or less; those that had lasted between one and two years; and those over two years old. As Table 10 shows, 43 percent of the matches had lasted for two years or more, followed by matches between one and two years old (30%), and matches of a year or less (27%).

Matches lasting five, 10, 15 and 20 years or more are a source of pride for BB/BS agencies, and are the stuff of many heartwarming anecdotes. As such, they more closely resemble kinship than social interventions.

**Table 10**  
**MATCH LONGEVITY AND MEETING FREQUENCY**

	One year old or less	Between one and two years old	Over two years old
Percentage of total matches (N=811)	27%	30%	43%
Percentage meeting at least once	96%	89%	83%
Average number of meetings	3.1	2.8	1.8

While documenting such matches, these data also point to an issue of considerable policy relevance to BB/BS agencies: whether to continue considering matches as potential lifelong commitments or to reassign experienced volunteers once the match has reached some critical point. If done, reassignment might be triggered by the length of the match (e.g., three, four or five years), or by the youth's having reached some critical age or stage in his or her development.

This is a difficult issue. On one hand, sustained interventions should be valued, since they are more likely to effect change of the kind needed in the lives of at-risk youth than short-term interventions (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). Moreover, some Big Brothers and Big Sisters interviewed for this study cited the potential for a long-term relationship with a child as an important factor in their desire to participate in the program.

On the other hand, the BB/BS agencies face a difficult choice concerning how best to deploy scarce resources: to provide a sustained intervention for a smaller number of youth, or a shorter-term intervention for larger numbers. The dilemma is exacerbated by the magnitude of the program's waiting list. Youth can remain on the waiting list for years; some eventually age out of eligibility without ever being matched. At the same time, volunteers are maintaining matches that have lasted five years or more. In light of the large numbers of volunteers in these longer-term matches, and the size of the waiting list, a position favoring "term limitations" and redeployment of skilled volunteers might permit BB/BSA to better address its waiting list problem.

### Frequency

The data reveal a very high rate of interaction between volunteers and youth. Virtually all (96%) of the first-year matches had met during the previous month, and these matches averaged 3.1 meetings in the four weeks. Older matches, for which there are no guidelines regarding how often the two should get together, were also meeting at a very high rate. Among the matches in existence between one and two years, 89 percent had met at least once; among matches of more than two years' duration, 83 percent had met and the matches averaged 1.8 meetings.

This high rate of interaction compares very favorably with the frequency of meetings that occur between matches in other mentoring programs. While no mentoring program exactly parallels BB/BSA, and uniform data are not available from those that do exist, a comparison of these programs and their outcomes is nevertheless warranted. In making these comparisons, however, allowances must be made for program variations. Other mentoring programs can differ from BB/BSA in a number of ways, including:

- The characteristics of the volunteers--Some programs are exclusively for college students or elders; the age range of Big Brothers/Big Sisters is far more inclusive.

- The motivation of the volunteers--Particularly important is whether volunteers are paid through a stipend that offsets the cost of volunteering.
- The characteristics of the target population--The extent to which the youth can be considered at risk varies widely, with some programs specifically targeting certain groups of high-risk youth.
- The institutional setting of the relationship, if any.

The following observations regarding BB/BSA and the other mentoring programs are offered with these caveats in mind.

The program serving the target population most similar to that of BB/BSA is CPIL, where low-income middle school youth experiencing problems in school performance are mentored by college students. In P/PV's study of six CPIL programs, 29 pairs at three campuses were studied in depth; 43 percent of these matches had met only rarely (if at all) over the course of an entire academic year (Tierney and Branch, 1992). Across the campuses, the rate at which the interactions took place varied widely--between 35 percent and 90 percent of all scheduled meetings between mentors and youth actually took place--and showed a lower overall frequency of interaction than that observed among the BB/BS sites.

In the juvenile justice project sites, where adults are paired with adjudicated youth, the rate of interaction was low or high, depending on whether the youth was in a residential or nonresidential setting. In the nonresidential or community setting--where youth, though adjudicated, remain in their own communities--the percentage of matches failing to meet in the five-week period examined in a recent analysis of program data was very high--59 percent. In settings where youth were incarcerated, mentors' logs showed that only 3 percent of matches failed to meet during the five-week period (Greim, 1992).

The Linking Lifetimes programs--a group of intergenerational programs pairing elders with at-risk youth with a variety of problems, including poor school performance, contact with the juvenile justice system and teenage pregnancy--also showed a high rate of interaction. A recent study examining whether meaningful relationships had formed between the elders and youth found a high meeting rate--upward of six times a month (Styles and Morrow, 1992). While this exceeds the rate of interaction taking place within the BB/BS agencies in the implementation analysis, the high rate is consistent with the fact that the Linking Lifetimes elders are paid only if meetings take place as scheduled. In addition, several of these programs operate within schools that set aside daily classroom time for meetings between the elders and the youth.

Thus, the rate of interaction taking place in BB/BSA stands out relative to those of mentoring programs where both the youth and the adults come together of their own

volition. Only in programs where the volunteers are paid, or the youth are a captive audience, are rates comparable.

### Failure to Meet

Across sites, 11 percent of volunteers had not met with their youth at all in the four weeks prior to the survey. However, having failed to meet in any given four-week period does not necessarily indicate a troubled relationship. Such lapses can happen for good and understandable reasons--most having to do with time conflicts. In fact, 52 percent of these volunteers gave such reasons--e.g., the volunteer was on vacation, or the youth was spending time with the noncustodial parent or played softball during the time they usually got together. Had another four-week period been chosen, the picture might have been different.

Another response--given by 17 percent of these volunteers--was less situation-specific and in some respects more troubling: loss of interest by either or both parties. While there are legitimate reasons pairs could lose interest in the relationship--among them the youth's outgrowing their need for it--this response might mean that the adult and youth are not as well suited for one another as originally thought. As a result, it can be considered something of a barometer of problems in the relationship. As the following sections indicate, the rate at which volunteers cite a loss of interest tends to increase when program practices depart significantly from national standards and procedures.

## INDIVIDUAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RATE OF INTERACTION

Are there significant variations in the rate of interaction for key subgroups of youth within the Little Brothers/Little Sisters population? In particular, do boys and girls differ with respect to any of these variables? Do white and minority youth? Youth in same-race and cross-race matches?

### Gender

Considering all sites, few differences were found between boys and girls in any of the variables examined. They were equally likely (89% for both) to have met with their Big in the previous four weeks. The difference in the average number of meetings--2.6 for boys and 2.4 for girls--approached statistical significance ( $p < .10$ ).

However, a gender-related finding did emerge from the comparison of discrete and combined agencies. The rate of interaction at each of the discrete agencies was higher than for the combined sites in the study. The likelihood of a meeting having taken place in the prior four-week period was only slightly lower for boys in combined agencies (88%) than for boys in the discrete Big Brothers agency in the sample (90%). For girls, however, being in the discrete Big Sisters agency was associated with a significantly greater

likelihood of having met in the prior four-week period (94%) than was being in the combined agencies (86%).

Thus, while both boys and girls fare very well with respect to this variable--regardless of whether they are in combined or discrete agencies--discrete agencies seem able to facilitate an even greater likelihood of meeting for Big Sister pairs.

### Race

For minority youth who make it through the waiting list, the experience of being a Little Brother or Little Sister is similar to that of their nonminority counterparts in some ways, but different in others. Few differences emerge from a comparison of meeting variables for white and minority youth: their likelihood of having met with their mentor during the four-week period is the same, and there is no statistically significant difference in the number of meetings over the measured four weeks.

There are major differences, however, with regard to cross-race matches. The different racial profiles of the adults and youth involved in these agencies dictate that many cross-race matches be made. In fact, while the majority of matches (71%) involved adults and youth from the same race, the majority of minority youth (76%) are in cross-race matches.<sup>10</sup> The 24 percent of minority youth in same-race matches are overwhelmingly black youth paired with black adults.

Between same-race and cross-race matches, there was no difference in the number of meetings held over the four-week period. Minority youth paired with minority volunteers met no more frequently (2.8 meetings) than minority youth paired with white volunteers (2.4 meetings).

However, volunteers paired with minority youth who had not met during this period gave reasons that differed significantly for same-race and cross-race pairs. White volunteers were significantly more likely to say that they had not met because of loss of interest--i.e., either the volunteer believed the youth had outgrown the relationship and was more interested in interacting with friends, or the volunteer was losing interest. This finding is important because research on other mentoring programs suggests that lack of interest on the part of the youth is often a precursor to voluntary termination of the match--the youth "voting" with his or her feet.

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<sup>10</sup> A small number of white youth were paired with adults from a minority background--adults who identified themselves as Hispanic, Asian or of mixed-race background.

## PROGRAMMATIC FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RATE OF INTERACTION

This section explores variations in the rate of interaction associated with specific program practices that may be worthy of emulation by other mentoring programs.

### Frequency of Meeting Requirements

In an attempt to attract volunteers who are thought to shy away from becoming Big Brothers and Big Sisters primarily because of the time commitment, three of the eight sites relaxed their requirement that pairs meet weekly.

Two sites asked that volunteers commit to at least twice-monthly meetings; at the third, thrice-monthly meetings were required. Volunteers who may have been encouraged to come forward because of these sites' relaxed requirements in fact exceeded them: pairs in these sites met almost as frequently as those in sites where requirements have not been eased. The difference in the actual rate of meeting--on average 2.7 meetings per month in sites requiring weekly meetings and 2.5 per month in sites not requiring weekly meetings--is statistically significant but small. Thus, the early results from this experiment are encouraging: the relaxed time commitment allowed sites to experiment with new ways of recruiting volunteers who would not have come forward under the old rules, yet the youth paired with these volunteers got virtually the same amount of interaction they would have experienced had the requirement not been relaxed.

### Training

Whether training is required, how long it lasts, at what point in the intake process it occurs, and what it entails are all important issues for mentoring programs. Some observers believe that mentoring requires little in the way of training--that well-meaning adults need only exercise their natural relationship skills to become good mentors. Most mentoring programs, however, provide some training for volunteers, their preexisting relationship skills notwithstanding.

Unlike the majority of mentoring programs, BB/BSA national procedures do not mandate that Big Brothers and Big Sisters receive either pre- or post-match training. Nevertheless, four of the eight sites in the implementation study--sites D, E, G and H--require that volunteers receive between one-and-one-half and nine hours of training before being matched. The average duration of training in these sites is three hours. If a volunteer does not attend, the match process is delayed until he or she does so.

In these programs, training is an opportunity to inform volunteers about the types of youth with whom they are likely to be matched, and the kinds of problems they are likely to encounter with either the youth or the youth's parent. In fact, agencies that provide pre-match training will often convey worst-case scenarios, using information gathered during match supervision, to temper volunteer expectations that could lead to disappoint-

ment or, worse, a failed match. Training also imparts specific skills, such as active listening and limit-setting, and provides information about adolescent development and appropriate roles for volunteers to take with their youth.

BB/BS agencies also use their sessions to clarify what is expected of volunteers in terms of their responsibilities to both the relationship and the agency. By reiterating match requirements and responsibilities, agencies can help volunteers more closely align expectations with what they are likely to confront over the course of their relationships. At Agencies G and H, training is a part of the screening process, conducted prior to volunteer acceptance or rejection. Here, the training session offers caseworkers an opportunity to observe how volunteers respond to role-plays and scenarios they are likely to encounter during meetings with their Little Brothers or Little Sisters. Caseworkers observe how the volunteers interact with each other and respond to the group, gauging personality traits that will later help them decide which youth to select for the match.

On the other hand, Agencies A, B, C and F, acting on a belief that training imposes an unnecessary burden on the volunteers, provide virtually nothing in the way of pre-match training. However, three of these sites conduct group orientation sessions. These agencies occasionally offer in-service sessions that address topical issues of concern to matched volunteers, and Agencies A and F recommend training within the first two to six months of the match. In general, however, because training is not mandatory, it does not happen with any great frequency. Thus, for analysis purposes, the level of training provided at sites D, E, G and H contrasts with the relative lack of training provided at sites A, B, C and F.

Because of the low level of training provided within BB/BS sites, no significant differences were found in any of the measures of interaction between the sites providing some training and those providing none at all. That is, the average three-hour increment was not sufficient to make a difference in the likelihood of meeting, the reasons for not having met, or the frequency of meetings. (See Table 11.) Training's influence on what the pairs do together and how they feel about it has yet to be evaluated. This aspect of the process will be examined as part of the relationship formation study, which will be detailed in a future report.

### Supervision and Support

In contrast to training, supervision is a hallmark of the BB/BS model. In fact, BB/BSA is alone among mentoring programs at the high end of the continuum on this variable. But while all BB/BS study sites share this emphasis on supervision, they still vary significantly in this area. These variations are, for the most part, creatures of necessity. Confronted with large caseloads, more at-risk youth and competing responsibilities for fundraising and community outreach, agencies have devised sometimes novel approaches to the ongoing supervision of matches. Sites vary on the following dimensions of supervision:



**Table 11**  
**MEETING VARIABLES DURING FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO SURVEY**  
**BY PROGRAMMATIC FACTORS**

Programmatic Factors	Average Number of Meetings	Match Not Meeting (%)	Match Not Meeting Because of Loss of Interest (%)
<u>Pre-Match Training</u>			
Provided	2.7	10.7	19.5
Not provided	2.4	11.6	15.7
<u>Supervision</u>			
		##	###
Caseworker initiates contact	2.5	10.4	12.8
Volunteer initiates contact	2.5	19.2	42.9
		###	#
Caseworkers have hands-on role	2.6	9.7	12.7
Caseworkers use referrals	2.4	17.3	27.6
			###
Caseworkers supervise	2.5	10.6	10.9
Supervision is shared	2.6	12.4	27.0
	###	#	##
Face-to-face contact	2.6	9.3	10.3
Contact by phone	2.3	13.3	22.6

### Indicates that the percentages or averages differ with respect to this variable at a 0.01 level of significance.

## Indicates that the percentages or averages differ with respect to this variable at a 0.05 level of significance.

# Indicates that the percentages or averages differ with respect to this variable at a 0.10 level of significance.

- Whether (in compliance with national standards) caseworkers contact volunteers to supervise their matches or--as in the case of Agency H--permit volunteers to mail in a record of their contacts with youth;
- Whether caseworkers supervise through face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations;
- Whether caseworkers delegate the supervision of matches that are over a year old to interns or part-time staff;
- Whether the caseworker, when confronted with problems beyond the scope of the program, is an active participant in their solution or refers the youth and parent to other agencies.

Agency H is the only study site in which volunteers mail in their monthly record of interactions; this approach is worthy of examination because of its similarity to the practices of newer mentoring programs. As shown in Table 11, Big Brothers and Big Sisters at this site (19.2%) were significantly more likely to have failed to meet with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters during the four-week period inquired about in the survey, than were volunteers (10.4%) at the sites following national standards of caseworker contact with volunteers, parents and youth. In addition, volunteers at this site were more likely than those at sites providing supervision in the traditional manner (42.9% versus 12.8%) to say that loss of interest was the reason for a failure to meet at all.

Although Agency H has a reputation for experimenting with practices at variance with national standards, this is the only practice in which it stood in complete contrast to practices followed in the other sites. This outcome therefore seems attributable to the difference in supervision--that is, it suggests that supervision decreases the number of volunteers who fail to meet with their charges for as long as a month. Moreover, the extremely high number of volunteers in Agency H citing lack of interest--be it their own, the youth's, or both--as the reason for the failure to meet suggests problems in the relationship that might have been addressed with increased supervision.

Beyond this threshold, however, Agency H's approach to supervision does not seem to have affected how frequently the pairs met--the average number of meetings for volunteers mailing in their contact records was virtually the same as the average number of meetings occurring in sites where supervision was more traditional. Rather, frequency of meetings seems as much a function of relationship dynamics as of program structure. This is particularly true for those relationships that have lasted beyond the first year, when monitoring is relaxed.

A similar pattern arises when other variations in the approach taken to supervision among the study sites are examined--i.e., these variations are more likely to affect whether any interaction occurred and the reasons for its failure to occur, than the number of

interactions. Sites where the caseworker played a hands-on role in resolving problems had a higher rate of compliance with the program's meeting requirements than sites where the caseworker merely made referrals. In addition, the likelihood was significantly greater in the "referring" sites that loss of interest would be the reason cited for failure to meet.

Using interns or part-time caseworkers to supervise cases that had lasted for more than a year had no effect on either of the meeting variables, but did result in a greater likelihood that a volunteer would attribute failure to meet to a loss of interest. The only supervision variable that affected both meeting variables--the likelihood of meeting at all and the frequency of meetings--was whether supervision was done primarily through face-to-face meetings or phone contact.<sup>11</sup> Face-to-face supervision reduced the likelihood that the volunteer would completely fail to meet with the youth in the four-week period, and also produced a significantly higher number of meetings.

Overall, these findings support the emerging consensus among observers of mentoring programs that supervision is essential. When agencies, motivated by a need to respond to a growing caseload, have attempted to lessen the amount of supervision provided (by allowing volunteers to report on their activities through the mail; by delegating responsibilities for some matches to interns; or by relying on telephone supervision rather than face-to-face supervision), there has usually been a negative impact on the pairs' continuing interest in the relationship and often a reduced rate of interaction between pairs.

This generalization is further borne out by combining these findings with those from studies of other mentoring programs. Supervision of mentors was high in BB/BSA; moderate in the Linking Lifetimes programs and the residential juvenile justice site; and low for CPIL and the community-based juvenile justice site. The rate of interaction occurring between the adults and youth generally followed a similar pattern--i.e., it was highest in BB/BS and the residential juvenile justice sites, where supervision was moderate to high, and lowest in CPIL and the community-based juvenile justice site, where supervision was low.

## SUMMARY

The BB/BS model stands out among mentoring programs in both the longevity of the matches it facilitates, and the rate of interaction between the adults and youth it brings together. As such, it is worth examining the policies and practices that have contributed to these outcomes.

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<sup>11</sup> Although BB/BSA does not require face-to-face contact as part of supervision, a face-to-face meeting with the parent/guardian, youth or volunteer is the equivalent of two telephone contacts. Augmenting phone contact with regular in-person meetings is a matter of individual agency policy.

Within this very high level of performance, there are issues that bear discussion. First, the rate of interaction remains high even when sites--in hopes of recruiting volunteers who cannot make the full commitment--reduce the requirement that volunteers meet with their youth once a week. While a reduction in the number of meetings does result, it is slight enough that the experiment would be justified if it has the effect of getting more volunteers in the door. (The data are not yet available to make this assessment.)

Second, the very longevity of the matches poses a dilemma for BB/BS agencies. Although asked to make a commitment for a year, large numbers of matches last considerably longer. These long-term matches continue to draw on staff and volunteer resources while large numbers of youth remain on the waiting list, never receiving even the one-year match set forth in the model. Whether to continue to allocate resources in this way is an issue to which BB/BSA and its affiliates might give thought; they might consider reassigning experienced volunteers after the match has lasted for an agreed-on period, or when the youth reaches some critical age or stage in his or her development.

Third, there is some evidence that supports the continued efficacy of discrete (single-sex) agencies. That is, more pairs in combined agencies--both Big Brother and Big Sister matches--failed to meet during the survey period than pairs in discrete agencies. The difference in the likelihood of meeting in combined and discrete agencies was not significant for boys, but was significant for girls.

Fourth, there was a small, marginally significant difference in the frequency with which Big Brother and Big Sister pairs met during the survey period--Big Brothers and their Little Brothers met 2.6 times while Big Sisters and their Little Sisters met 2.4 times. Whether this difference indicates different levels of satisfaction with the relationship, or portends significant differences in important developmental outcomes will be explored in future reports.

Fifth, preliminary findings with respect to race are encouraging for those minority youth who make it off the waiting list and into a match--white and minority youth enjoy comparable rates of interaction. Moreover, while minority youth and their parents are likely to prefer same-race matches, minority youth paired with white volunteers met with the volunteers as frequently as those paired with same-race volunteers.

The rate of interaction does not necessarily predict either satisfaction with the relationship or positive outcomes, however. Before reaching conclusions about the value of cross-race matches, it is important to await the outcome of two studies--an in-depth study of the relationship formed between pairs, and a study comparing outcomes for youth who have a Big Brother or Big Sister with those for a randomly assigned group of youth who do not. The only measure of the quality of the relationship in the present study--a failure to meet due to loss of interest--indicated a troubling difference between same-race and cross-race pairs.

Finally, the rate of interaction is influenced by variations in program practice, particularly the level of supervision provided. Across a number of variables concerning supervision--whether caseworkers relied on telephone contact instead of face-to-face interactions to supervise matches, delegated responsibility for supervision to less-experienced people, allowed volunteers to mail in reports of their contact with youth, or functioned more as referral agents than as active problem-solvers--lower levels of engagement on the part of the caseworker resulted in unfavorable outcomes. That is, pairs failing to meet because they had lost interest were much more common in sites where supervision was reduced. In addition, substituting telephone supervision for face-to-face sessions was associated with significantly fewer meetings between pairs.

By contrast, differences in the amount of training provided to volunteers was not related to the rate of interaction between pairs. This may be due, in part, to the relatively low levels (on average, three hours) of training provided in the sites where it is offered. In spite of this brevity, BB/BS training sessions do contain valuable information, including agency expectations and volunteer roles and responsibilities.



## V. FINDINGS AND LESSONS FOR THE MENTORING FIELD

This study of eight BB/BS programs--the first of a four-study evaluation of BB/BSA--documents the implementation of the program model. The study serves two distinct but conceptually linked purposes.

On the program level, it examines the utility of a number of variations in the basic model operating at eight BB/BS agencies that were selected, in part, to reflect differences in recruitment, screening, training, matching and supervision practices. On the policy level, it contributes to an understanding of what is necessary for effective mentoring. Toward this end, BB/BS program practices were compared with those of three more recently developed mentoring initiatives, identifying the practices they share and examining the primary outcomes they generate--meetings between pairs of adults and youth.

### ASSESSING THE BB/BS MODEL: A PRELIMINARY LOOK

This review of the policies and practices implemented in the eight BB/BS study sites has identified some of the strengths and weaknesses of this means of assisting at-risk youth. Its findings suggest that BB/BSA is more effective in supporting the matches it has established than it is in bringing the adults and youth to the match in the first place.

Overall, BB/BS agencies have not been able to recruit adequate numbers of adults to pair with the youth who have gone through intake and taken their place on the waiting list. This may reflect a general paucity of adults willing to come forward to serve as mentors, and/or a paucity of adults willing to be subjected to BB/BS's distinctive screening process and take on its particular approach to mentoring. The former explanation is supported by the experience of other mentoring programs, virtually all of which have difficulty recruiting volunteers. The very existence and even modest recruitment success of these programs supports the second proposition and can be viewed as a testing ground for alternative approaches worthy of consideration.

The picture is much more straightforward when it comes to supporting the match. Whether it is orientation, pre-match training, post-match training, in-service training, extra-match services or ongoing supervision, the BB/BS model undergirds the match at many points in its life. Although--as the analyses in the previous chapter demonstrate--some outcomes are both logically and statistically associated with specific individual practices, the aggregate level of supports has resulted in high rates of interaction that characterize the BB/BS approach and distinguish it from all other mentoring programs.

#### Recruitment

Although BB/BSA is the oldest and largest mentoring program in operation in the United States, it--like some of the newer mentoring initiatives--nevertheless struggles in its

attempts to recruit volunteers in sufficient numbers for the youth seeking Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Within the eight agencies that were the subject of this study--and across all agencies--the number of youth actually matched was only about half the number who sought matches. While its sizable waiting list partly reflects BB/BSA's appeal, it also attests to the fact that the supply of volunteers has failed to keep up with the demand.

BB/BS agencies have had difficulty recruiting adequate numbers of volunteers from both its traditional base of volunteers (the white, college-educated, middle- to upper-income individuals it has traditionally recruited) and the populations it has recently targeted (minority volunteers and volunteers from working-class backgrounds). In response to these problems, agencies have tried a number of strategies; some appear promising while some have met with only limited success.

Word of mouth--by far the most successful volunteer recruitment technique--has been formalized and utilized with some success in a number of the agencies in the study. Some agencies have directed recruitment campaigns toward specific subgroups within the general adult pool; however, this targeted recruitment has not, in and of itself, produced the desired number of minority volunteers. When conducted by agencies with racially diverse boards of directors and staff, however, this strategy appears to have been more successful. Agencies whose board and staff include significant numbers of minorities--who become actively engaged in the recruitment process--have the highest percentages of minority volunteers. Sites interested in recruiting minority volunteers might consider looking first at the composition of their board and staff, since an appeal from someone of the same race seems to be the most effective approach.

Another recruitment strategy that has met with some success is experimenting with the time commitments required of potential volunteers. Across mentoring programs, the amount of time mentors are expected to commit is widely viewed as the single greatest deterrent to volunteering (Freedman, 1992). Several study sites have experimented with reduced requirements, to generally good effect. Two sites that accepted less than a full year's commitment were able to recruit college students and military personnel who might otherwise be screened out. Other sites have reduced the required frequency of meetings. While the data are not yet available to fully evaluate the effects of this change on recruitment, it presumably brought in volunteers who were reluctant to commit to weekly meetings of two to four hours. Interestingly, volunteers at these sites not only exceeded these reduced requirements, they met with their charges at rates that were all but indistinguishable from those in sites where requirements had not been relaxed.

Another approach that might be worth considering is the redeployment of volunteers who have already been recruited. Substantial numbers of volunteers (43% of those surveyed) are in long-term matches that substantially exceed the one-year commitment that volunteers were originally asked to make. These matches continue even as large numbers of youth languish on the waiting list--some leaving it only as they age out of eligibility.



The reassignment of these experienced volunteers--after the current relationship has been in effect for some number of years, or when the youth reaches some critical age--might increase BB/BSA's capacity to serve youth who want to be matched with caring adults. On the other hand, it would represent a dramatic shift in policy--one that could have many unintended consequences. For instance, volunteers attracted to BB/BSA precisely because of the opportunity to make a long-term serious commitment might be deterred.

P/PV's qualitative study of the effectiveness of short-term and long-term relationships will provide information that should prove useful for an evaluation of this option.

### Screening

The rigor with which BB/BS agencies conduct screening is unique: BB/BS volunteers go through a process that is typically more time-consuming and more invasive than that experienced by potential volunteers in the Linking Lifetimes, CPIL, and juvenile justice mentoring programs.

There are both advantages and drawbacks to such a strenuous approach to screening. On one hand, it reassures parents who are justifiably concerned that their children will be spending unsupervised time with an adult they do not yet know. In addition, it protects the organization against potential litigation and contributes to its credibility. On the other hand, an overly lengthy screening process increases the time a youth remains on the waiting list. And the invasiveness of the process--e.g., asking for detailed personal information, including sexual history--may deter eligible adults from applying or cause them to withdraw once they enter this stage of the process.

A review of the screening practices employed in the study sites suggests a number of ways to speed the process and reduce its invasiveness. First, "hard" requirements--residential and job stability, time availability, access to transportation, etc.--should be stated up front in the application packet so potential volunteers can judge their likelihood of successfully completing the process, and, if necessary, screen themselves out. Agency resources can then be utilized for candidates with a greater likelihood of passing muster.

Other strategies found to expedite screening include accepting verbal references and conducting subsequent steps without waiting for all written references to be returned (the screening component that tends to add the most time to the process). The invasiveness of the psychosocial interview could be reduced if caseworkers adhere to the principle of asking only for information that will be used either to determine volunteer eligibility or to constructively inform the match decision.

## Matching

Of all BB/BSA's program components, matching remains the most enigmatic. Apart from such practical considerations as common interests and geographic proximity, there is little else about this process that is tangible. The caseworker's "gut feeling" that helps to guide matchmaking is real--a function of insight gained through experience. However, it is a feeling that is largely untranslatable.

There is one tangible aspect of the BB/BS match process, however, that could lend itself to replication by other mentoring programs. Unlike most other mentoring programs, BB/BS agencies take into account the youth's preferences for both the kind of mentor they want, and the kinds of activities they would like to engage in with that person.

Parents' preferences are also considered. A parent may accept or reject a recommended match in much the same way the agency accepts or rejects its volunteer applicants. In addition, parents attend the match meeting and are contacted in the course of match supervision. As such, they are more likely to be engaged in the process and to make sure that their children follow through on their commitment to the relationships.

## Training

Overall, BB/BSA provides less training than other mentoring programs, due in part to its greater emphasis on screening and supervision. Training is not required by BB/BSA, merely recommended.<sup>12</sup> BB/BS agencies that utilize orientation and training sessions use them to impart skills, convey expectations, and give volunteers an indication of the type of youth they are likely to be paired with. This information is designed to assist volunteers as they interact with their assigned youth, who are often from different racial or socioeconomic backgrounds.

In the four agencies in this study that require training prior to the match, sessions are well attended, and participants report that the training is helpful. The other four do not require pre-match training, and while they occasionally offer in-service sessions, the sessions are poorly attended. All told, however, there was little variation in the hours of training provided by these agencies, and the variation that did exist was not found to result in different rates of interaction between volunteers and youth.

Nonetheless, the content of training is particularly helpful, as it includes enhancement of such interpersonal skills as communication and limit-setting, as well as conveying program policies, ideas for outings, participant expectations and general information about

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<sup>12</sup> It is too early to assess the impact of BB/BSA's recently developed Volunteer Education and Development training design: it was being introduced just as data collection for this report was being completed. Five of the eight agencies in this study have participated in this effort.

waiting list youth--elements that previous studies (e.g., Styles and Morrow, 1992) have found to be associated with the formation of effective relationships.

### Supervision

Supervision is a hallmark of the BB/BS approach to mentoring. Caseworkers maintain regular contact with all match participants--volunteers, youth and parents alike--during the first year of the match, and intervene as necessary by providing information and/or referrals. In addition, any participant may call the caseworker on an as-needed basis. Since the caseworker is in regular contact with the youth and parent as well as the volunteer, the youth's (and parent's) concerns remain a driving force in the match.

Consistent with this emphasis, supervision was the program practice most associated with positive match outcomes: those sites following national procedures for regular supervision had matches that were meeting at the highest rates. Those agencies that--in an attempt to manage increasing caseloads in the absence of increased revenues--reduced the nature or frequency of supervision had problems. In some cases, these agencies saw a reduction in compliance with agency requirements regarding meetings; in others, a reduction in the number of meetings taking place within a four-week period; and, in others, an increase in failure to meet due to loss of interest.

### Subgroup Differences

An issue of great concern to BB/BSA over the years, and a major reason for its interest in participating in this study, is its relative effectiveness in serving specific subgroups within its total client population. Specifically, it wanted to know--given the fairly recent merger of Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies--whether boys and girls were being served equally well in combined agencies, and whether combined agencies were as capable as discrete agencies of providing an appropriate intervention. In addition, it wanted to know whether the minority youth coming to its doors in increasing numbers were being as well served as white youth, and whether the cross-race matches that volunteer demographics dictated were as effective as same-race matches.

The findings from this study, the first step in answering these questions, are generally encouraging.

### Gender

There is reason to believe that the number of girls who actually appear at the doors of a BB/BS agency underestimates the actual number who would come forward were BB/BSA's recruitment materials focused equally on boys and girls. Girls who do apply are typically matched sooner than the boys who come forward, an issue to be addressed in a subsequent study. Once matched, rates of interaction are very similar for boys and

girls, even though there is a small, marginally significant tendency for boys and their Big Brothers to meet more frequently than Big Sister/Little Sister pairs.

When combined and discrete agencies are compared, the likelihood of having met during the past four weeks was higher for both boys and girls in discrete agencies. However, this difference was significant only for girls, suggesting that they alone receive an advantage from being served by a single-sex agency.

### Race

The experience of being a Little Brother or Little Sister is in many ways similar for white and minority youth. However, there are a few key differences. Due largely to stated preferences for same-race matches, minority youth typically wait longer to be matched than their white counterparts, and are thus more likely to remain on the waiting list for years, and age out of eligibility without ever getting a Big Brother or Big Sister. In the eight study agencies, there were 100 minority youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched, compared with only 65 white youth on the waiting list for every 100 matched. This situation was exacerbated for minority males, with 133 on the waiting list for every 100 matched.

The demographics of the volunteer population in the eight study sites dictate that in spite of youth's and parents' initial preferences, those minority youth who get through the waiting list are likely to be paired with an adult of another race--76 percent of minority youth in the survey were placed in cross-race matches. The opposite is true for white youth, who are rarely (if ever) paired with an adult of another race.

There were virtually no differences found in the experiences of minority youth in same-race matches and cross-race matches. They were equally likely to have met during the study period, and their rates of interaction were similar. These findings seem to justify the practice of making cross-race matches--a practice made necessary by the difficulty in recruiting minority volunteers.

Although these data are encouraging, they should be viewed with caution. In the absence of other indicators, the rate of interaction serves as an acceptable proxy for measuring the effectiveness of program practice; but until results are available from studies analyzing the nature of these interactions and their ability to effect meaningful changes in the lives of the youth, one should hold in abeyance final judgment of this practice. For instance, a study of the relationships formed by cross-race pairs might provide insight into the finding that loss of interest is more likely to be a factor when cross-race pairs fail to meet than when same-race pairs fail to do so.

## EXEMPLARY PROGRAM PRACTICES

One of the primary purposes of this study was to extract lessons that would be of use to the larger mentoring field--i.e., to determine whether BB/BSA or its agencies employ exemplary program practices that should be replicated by other mentoring programs. This study has, in fact, identified a number of practices that--because they seem associated with an increased probability that pairs will meet--are worthy of emulation. Future research will determine whether they also increase the likelihood of positive long-term outcomes for participants.

**Screening.** Volunteer screening is a necessary component for any mentoring program. It determines volunteer suitability, ensures the safety of participating youth, and protects the reputation of the program. This process should be accomplished as quickly as possible without compromising these aims. One component of BB/BSA's screening process--"hard" screening for volunteer eligibility through police checks, personal references and employment status--is particularly effective and should be followed by other mentoring programs.

**Matching.** BB/BS agencies take into account both parents' and youth's preferences, along with those of volunteers, when deciding what kind of volunteer should be paired with what youth. BB/BSA is one of few relationships programs implementing this practice, which may well be a critical factor to the success of the relationship. Previous research (Styles and Morrow, 1992) has shown that failing to take participant preferences into account results in relationships that are less likely to be enjoyable and effective.

Similarly, BB/BS agencies consult the youth's preferences for the activities in which the pair will engage and share that information with the assigned volunteer. He or she can then use it during the difficult early stages of the relationship, when the adult and the youth are struggling to get to know each other.

**Cross-Race Matching.** This study found no significant differences in the rate of interaction occurring in same-race and cross-race matches. Programs should, therefore, continue this practice while continuing specific efforts to recruit minority volunteers, since minority youth and their parents generally prefer same-race matches.

In this regard, organizations interested in recruiting minority volunteers should first seek to diversify their boards of directors and staff. In this study, a direct approach by a person of the same racial background was shown to be an effective tool in recruiting minority volunteers.

**Supervision.** Supervision, similarly, is an essential component of a successful mentoring program and a particular hallmark of BB/BSA. At minimum, it prevents egregious deviations from the program's policies regarding the required frequency of meetings. A comparison of the supervision practices of BB/BS and several other mentoring programs

indicates that the rate of interaction occurring between adults and youth will be highest in programs where there is a well-implemented and consistent system of supervision.

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## APPENDIX A

### METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) is the cornerstone of P/PV's five-year initiative to explore the research and policy implications of creating adult mentoring relationships for at-risk youth, and to test the hypothesis that such relationships can facilitate positive development. Our BB/BSA research was also designed to address questions concerning particular types of matches (e.g., in what ways the experience of girls who are matched is different from that of boys who are matched, and whether cross-race matches are as effective as same-race matches).

The agenda includes four separate but interrelated studies of 15 Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs: 1) an impact study to determine whether, in the aggregate, relationships with a Big Brother or Big Sister facilitate positive outcomes for youth (e.g., improved school performance and prosocial behavior); 2) a relationship formation study designed to explore the content, process and practices of relationships formed between youth and their Big Brothers or Big Sisters; 3) a volunteer applicant pool study that examines the process of becoming a volunteer from inquiry to match and identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the screening process; and 4) this study of program practices, which documents the implementation of the BB/BS program model and its effectiveness in facilitating meetings between youth and adults.

#### SITE SELECTION

There are upward of 500 BB/BS agencies throughout the country. P/PV solicited the participation of a group of agencies that would reflect the variations in BB/BS operations; this was accomplished through presentations of the P/PV research agenda at BB/BSA's 1991 national conference and a survey distributed to all agencies that requested a profile of philosophy, participants and practices. P/PV staff visited 26 agencies in Spring 1991; 15 agencies were selected for participation in the four studies.<sup>13</sup> Of these, eight were selected for participation in the implementation study.

In selecting these eight sites, variation in practices was the overriding criterion. The following other criteria were also employed in the site selection process: geography, size

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<sup>13</sup> The 15 sites are: BB/BS of Alamo Area, Inc. (San Antonio TX); BB/BS of Metropolitan Chicago; BB/BS Association of Columbus and Franklin County, Inc. (Columbus OH); BB/BS of Forsyth County, Inc. (Winston-Salem NC); BB&S of Houston; BB of Greater Indianapolis; BS of Central Indiana, Inc. (Indianapolis IN); BB/BS of Jackson County, Inc. (Jackson MI); BB/BS of Marin (San Rafael CA); BB/BS of Greater Minneapolis; BB/BS Association of Philadelphia, Inc.; Community Partners for Youth, Inc. (Rochester NY); BB&S of Sedgwick County, Inc. (Wichita KS); BB&S of Spokane; and Valley BB/BS (Phoenix AZ).

of agency, gender(s) of youth served, and program practices, including recruitment, screening, training, matching, supervision, and provision of extra-match services.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

From Summer 1991 through Winter 1992, two P/PV staff members visited the eight BB/BS agencies. At each site, they interviewed agency staff, including the executive director, casework supervisor, caseworkers and board president. Public relations directors, fundraising staff and satellite office staff were also interviewed when agencies had these positions.

Separate focus group discussions were conducted with matched volunteers, matched youth and parents. Participants were asked to reflect on their expectations before entering the BB/BS program and their experiences with the program to date. Program operations observed by P/PV staff included orientation, volunteer training, and general staff meetings.

A variety of documents were obtained to acquaint P/PV staff with program practices and activities and to provide insight into the matching process. Staff collected volunteer training materials, agency publications and newsletters, recruitment materials, and FY91 agency budgets. In addition, a random sample of files for matched youth, waiting youth, matched volunteers and rejected volunteers were reviewed at each agency.

Data were collected through uniform instruments and interview guides. Following each site visit, staff wrote structured reports that provided a description and assessment of agency practices by topic area (i.e., youth intake, volunteer intake, matching process, supervision, extra-match services). These reports drew on multiple sources, including individual interviews, focus group data, record reviews and observations.

The site visit reports were then analyzed to contrast and compare agency strategies pertaining to the critical program features under consideration, including recruiting, screening, training, matching and supervision practices. The goal of the analysis was to determine program practices that contribute to the successful facilitation of BB/BS matches.

Between March and April 1992, a telephone survey of volunteers from the eight participating sites was conducted. The purpose of the survey was to obtain more complete information about the extent to which meetings between volunteers and youth were taking place than was possible through a review of program records. The eight study sites provided P/PV researchers with match data, from which a sample was randomly selected. At the two largest sites, 175 volunteers in active matches were selected as respondents. At five others, 150 volunteers were selected. At the remaining site, where the total number of volunteers was approximately 100, all volunteers were included in the sample.

The resulting sample included 821 volunteers in active matches. (Volunteers in cross-gender matches and couples matches were excluded because we wanted to concentrate on the "traditional" one-to-one match.) Respondents were asked how long they had been matched with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters, and to describe their pattern of interaction over the preceding four-week period: whether they had met at all in the past four weeks; if not, why they had not; and, if so, how often they had met within that period. Volunteers who had met with their youth were also asked to describe the activities in which they had participated.

Data from the telephone survey were analyzed through quantitative techniques that included summary descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis and simple regression analysis. These data were used to assess whether particular program practices contributed to or hindered the rate of interaction between matched adults and youth.









