

PROGRAM: BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS

Population:

Population Served: 75,000 youth across the nation

Age: 5-18 year olds

Other characteristics: Youth who desire a match with a Big Brother or Big Sister; usually from a single parent family.

Program components:

<u>Component</u>	<u>Provided by</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Description</u>
Mentoring*	Adult volunteers	At least 1 year	1:1 mentor/youth ratio

Program objectives/goals:

Safety and security:	reduce the incidence of antisocial behaviors
Emotional support:	could improve relationships with parent and peers
Information and technical and academic skills:	improving motivation, attitude and achievement related to schoolwork
Social skills:	providing social, cultural and recreational enrichment
	improving peer relationships
Other:	improving self-concept

STUDY 1:

BBS1 Tierney, J.P., Grossman, J.B. & Resch, N.L. (1995). Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

Study objectives and measurements:

Objective

To assess whether the program reduced antisocial activities, improved academic performance, improved family and peer relationships, improved sense of self-esteem, increased cultural awareness

Measurement instrument

Baseline and 18 month follow-up survey of youth and parent
Records and data collected by program staff

Evaluation:

Type: Quantitative

Statistical techniques: Random assignment to treatment and control group

Population evaluated: 959 10-16 year olds who applied to BB/BS programs in 1992 and 1993 at eight local agencies

Outcome:

Evaluation participants who had participated in BB/BS were less likely to start using drugs or alcohol; were less likely to hit someone; had improved school attendance and performance; had improved attitudes toward completing schoolwork; and had improved peer and family relationships. They were not more likely to have an improved sense of self-esteem or increased exposure to cultural awareness. There were some differences in impacts according to race and gender.

Other information:

Services were provided for up to 17 months; the follow-up survey was conducted after 18 months.

Estimated costs are approximately \$1,000 per match for support and supervision of match.

* BB/BS institutes an extensive case-management approach to mentoring.

STUDY 2:

BBS2 Morrow, K. V. & Styles, M. B. (1995). Building relationships with youth in program settings: A study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

Study objectives and measurements:

Objective

To investigate the particular genre of adult/youth relationships that form under the BB/BS model

Measurement instrument

Semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with participants at two points in time, nine months apart. Review of each pair's case files to obtain demographic and other information on the participants Observations of agency and staff interviews regarding program practices and issues that arise in supervising pairs, when possible

Evaluation:

Type: Qualitative, with some quantitative description

Statistical techniques: None

Population evaluated: 82

Outcome:

One-on-one mentoring led to improvements in perceived scholastic competence. Students had fewer unexcused absences from school.

STUDY 3:

BBS3 Rhodes, J., Grossman, J., & Resch, N. (2000). Agents of change: Pathways through which mentoring relationships influence adolescents' academic adjustment. Child Development, 71, 1662-1671.

Study objectives and measurements:

Objective

To test a conceptual model of the pathways (specifically parent-child relationships) through which mentoring relationships influence adolescents' academic outcomes

Measurement instrument

See description for BBS1.

Evaluation:

Type: See description for BBS1.

Statistical techniques: Structural equation modeling; controls for baseline levels of outcomes

Population evaluated: See description for BBS1.

Outcome:

Improvements in parental relationships, reductions in unexcused absences and improvements in perceived scholastic competence. Direct effects of mentoring on global self-worth, school value, and grades were not detected but instead were mediated through improved parental relationships and scholastic competence.

STUDY 4:

BBS4 Furano, K., Roaf, P.A., Styles, M.B., & Branch, A.Y. (1993). Big Brothers/Big Sisters: A study of program practices. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures (P/PV).

Study objectives and measurements:

Objective

To determine whether the mandated elements of the BB/BS program are effective in facilitating meetings between youth and adults. Further, the study is designed to look at similarities and differences across gender, and between same-race and cross-race matches.

Measurement instrument

Comparisons are made between BB/BS agencies. Secondly, the BB/BS program is compared to three newer mentoring programs that Public/Private Ventures has studied.

Staff members at the BB/BS agencies were interviewed during the course of a weeklong visit, and focus groups were conducted with youth and parents and Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Public/Private Ventures staff also observed ongoing program activities.

Telephone interview of BB and BS was conducted to obtain data about the frequency, content, and duration of meetings between adults and youth.

Evaluation:

Type: Qualitative and quantitative

Statistical techniques: Descriptive chi-square tests and regression used to determine whether program practices contributed or hindered the rate of interaction between adults and youth

Population evaluated: Unit of analysis varies from program site to mentors

Outcome:

BB/BS programs stand out among mentoring programs in the longevity of the matches and in the frequency of meetings that occur between the adults and youth. At the study sites, the average length of a match was 28 months; the nationwide BB/BS average is one and one-half years. Mentors and mentees met an average of 3.1 times during the four-week study period. This effectiveness in length and frequency of interaction applies equally to various subgroups (e.g., cross-race matches).

Although not experimentally tested, P/PV's initial conclusion is that structure and support is precisely what is needed if mentoring is to play a key role in youth policy and programming. Professional BB/BS staff have responsibilities for making and supervising matches, recruiting, fundraising, and providing extra program services. Further, local agencies follow national BB/BS standards that provide for uniformity in recruitment, screening, training, matching, and supervision. BB/BS agencies take the youth's and parents' preferences into account when matching children and mentors.

STUDY 5:

BBS5 Grossman, Jean B. & Rhodes, Jean E. (1999). The test of time: Predictors and effects of duration in youth mentoring relationships. Unpublished manuscript.

Study objectives and measurements:

Objective

To assess the effects and predictors of duration in youth mentor relationships

Measurement instrument

See BBS1.

Evaluation:

Statistical techniques: Hazard Analysis

Population evaluated: See BBS1.

Outcome:

The following characteristics place matches at greater risk of breaking up: (1) adolescents who were referred for psychological or educational programs, or had sustained emotional, sexual, or physical abuse; (2) matches involving 13-16 year olds are 65% more likely to break up than matches involving 10-12 year olds; (3) matches involving lower income volunteers; (4) same-race minority matches compared with same-race white matches *except* in minority matches in which race was an explicit matching criteria; and (5) matches involving volunteer married persons 26-30 years old, who were 86% more likely to terminate their relationship each month compared with matches with 18-25 year old volunteers, and far more likely than non-married 26-30 year olds (who were *less* likely to terminate relationships relative to 18-25 year old volunteers). The negative effects of being a married volunteer 26-30 years old and being of lower income are due to the lower levels of youth-centeredness in these relationships. Considering that very short relationships have the potential to harm children, these findings suggest careful matching of mentors who have the available time to commit to mentoring. They also suggest supervision of the relationship to allow for problem-solving when conflicts do arise.

Other information:
