INFORMATION TO USERS

FROM SAND TO CEMENT: UNDERSTANDING
THE BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS SCHOOL BUDDIES PROGRAM IN
CHAMPAIGN-URBANA

BY

KASHELIA BRIANNE JACKSON

B.A. Tougaloo College, 1997
M.A. Northern Illinois University, 1998

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Kashelia BriAnne Jackson

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Director of Thesis Research

Head of Department

Committee on Final Examination†

Chairperson

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the infrastructure of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Champaign County *SchoolBuddies* program. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of what structural components are conducive for creating strong mentoring bonds and establishing positive mentoring relationships. In this study eight mentor/mentee pairs from Prairie Elementary School of Urbana, IL were observed and interviewed. Additionally, mentors were surveyed and other adults involved in the program were also interviewed. The results of this study have significant implications in that they can offer valuable insights for creating improved mentoring initiatives.

In Loving Memory of
My sister, my friend, and my mentor
Yoichi Nechelle Jackson
Who was taken from me on
January 23, 2003.
Thank you, Yo, for the gift of inspiration
and the gift of laughter;
Thank you for being my example and a great sister;
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INTRODUCTION

He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:48-49)

Purpose of Study

Over the last several decades educators and communities have feverishly struggled to find ways to alleviate the educational, social, and economic deprivation that has befallen African-American and other minority students. Teachers and administrators scuffle to increase test scores and decrease drop out rates. Communities strive to motivate their youth, impress upon them the importance and relevance of education in their lives, and shield them from the systemic racism and classicism that can cripple and destroy their futures. One method that communities and now educators are looking toward to combat these negative circumstances is through organized mentoring programs.

As planned mentoring, particularly school-based mentoring, is being considered more and more as a form of intervention for at-risk youth, several questions concerning how such programs impact youth have developed. How do school-based mentoring programs address the needs of all its students? Do some ethnic groups benefit from the programs more than others? Are improvements necessary to help these programs better serve at-risk African-American and other minority youth? What role does African-

American community involvement play in making these programs beneficial for African-American students? What are the key components to a successful mentoring program? Are there areas in the design and structure of organized mentoring that need to be re-evaluated? What are some major factors that foster positive mentoring relationships? Is it possible that school based mentoring can be used to help bridge the gap between the school and community? In an effort to address some of these questions this research will look specifically at the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) *School Buddies* program here in Champaign county.

Because of the design and purpose of this study many of the previously mentioned questions surrounding school-based mentoring will remain unanswered. This research is not designed to measure the academic achievement or social and behavioral improvements of the students involved in the *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County even though these factors may be strong indicators of the program's success. The purpose of this study is to specifically examine the organization of the *School Buddies* program and assess if the foundational designs and structures of the program offer an environment that is conducive for successful mentoring.

As most scholars point out, at the center of any successful mentoring relationship is the bond that is established between the adult and the protégé (Herrera, et. al., 2000). However, in order for this bond to be established and maintained there are essential characteristics within the structure and design of the mentoring program that must be present (Rhodes, 2002). This study will attempt to identify some of those essential

factors and determine if they are indeed present in the structure of the BBBS *School Buddies* program here in Champaign county.

In an effort to thoroughly explore this topic, the study will first cover in detail the history of mentoring and the evolution of the mentoring movement Within this history will be a discussion of mentoring goals and objectives, different types of mentoring, and the youth that these programs attempt to serve. This history will also include an extensive discussion of the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America program which is the oldest and largest mentoring program operating in the United States today (Beiswinger, 1985).

Second, this research will attempt to synthesize the benefits and shortcomings of mentoring by looking at the leading scholarship on organized mentoring programs. Through a close examination of the literature, the author will try to assess the benefits that mentoring programs offer for all at-risk youth as well as address the areas of mentoring that need further development. These suggestions will be based on the findings and results discussed in the literature. Additionally, in an effort to gauge the possible effectiveness of the *School Buddies* program in Champaign county, this section of the study will also try to target some of the key factors related to program organization and structure that are common among successful mentoring programs.

Next, this study will look specifically at the students and mentors involved in the BBBS *School Buddies* program here in Champaign county to asses the students general attitude to the program and their mentors. To help assess this, mentor/mentee interaction will be closely observed; mentors and students will be interviewed to get a sense of their

perceptions of the program and their role as either mentor or protégé; and all mentors will be surveyed on various questions pertaining to mentoring. Other individuals affiliated with the program such as teachers, school/community outreach organizers, and BBBS program directors will also be interviewed to gauge how they feel about the program and its potential for success. Lastly, based on the results found in the *School Buddies* program, this study will offer suggestions that could help improve the structure and design of the program, make it more beneficial for the students and communities that it serves, and offer a more successful experience for all those involved.

As previously mentioned this study is not designed to answer all of the questions surrounding mentoring nor is it designed to measure the academic and social improvements of the students involved. This study will simply attempt to examine the factors that lend to successful mentoring, particularly key factors in program foundational designs and practices. According to Jean Rhodes, improvement in attitude, social skills, and academic outlook are not necessarily the goals of good-mentoring but instead the result of the positive relationships that are formed between the mentor and his protégé (2002). It then stands to reason that if these improvements are by-products of positive mentoring relationships then these strong relationships must be the by-product of careful program organization and carefully implemented program practices. Therefore, it must be reiterated that even though the core of successful mentor/protégé relationships is a strong bond, other factors that help to maintain the very basis of the program such as mentor recruitment, program support, and even mentor training must be conducive to forming these successful relationships. This study is significant in that it will look at the

structure and practices of a relatively new avenue in mentoring and help to establish a

better understanding of what factors are necessary to provide a successful school-based

mentoring programs and to offer more potential benefits to the students, their mentors,

and their communities. However, before a discussion of BBBS infrastructure can

commence, a better understanding of the connection between organizational design and

organizational achievement must first be gained.

Complex Organizations and the Importance of Infrastructure:
The Bureaucratic Model

According to Glenn Morgan, most complex organizations ten to "develop out of

conscious decision on the part of an individual or a group to achieve certain goals through

the bringing together in a disciplined fashion of human and material resources" (1990).

The objectives that are achieved within the "controlled" and "co-ordinated" mechanisms

of the organization would be impossible to accomplish for an individual and therefore

require a coalition of human and physical resources (Morgan, 1990). The infrastructure,

or underlying base of an organization, is what enables organizations to produce and

accomplish their objectives (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). This

base could consist of everything from the missions and founding principles of an

organization to the standards and by-laws which govern that organization. Essentially,

the infrastructure is the foundational components that enables an organization to function.

However, it is the design or model of that infrastructure that determines *how* a complex

organization will function (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America with its five hundred agencies and thousands of employees and volunteers nationwide functions as a complex organization. According to Blau and Scott most complex organizations usually fall into one of four categories: business organizations, service organizations, mutual benefit associations, and commonweal organizations (1962). BBBS would probably best be classified as a service organization which Blau and Scott define as organizations such as hospitals, schools and social agencies whose prime beneficiaries are the clients or customers (1962).

Just as there are several different ways in which complex organizations can be classified, there are also several different ways in which the infrastructure of organizations can be designed. However, the infrastructure of most organizations follow the patterns of a bureaucracy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). No matter how organizations vary in structure design, and purpose, most retain the major components of a bureaucracy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). The notion of organizations functioning as bureaucracies was derived from the work of German Sociologist Max Weber (Jones, 1996). Weber believed that because the major focus of most organizations was to achieve set goals and objectives, the rationality and logical decision making process found in the bureaucratic model was the most effective way to accomplish this (1947). And even though many scholars have challenged Weber's argument, his claim has continuously been substantiated by the fact that most organizations still conform to the bureaucratic model (Jones, 1996).

Weber found that the bureaucratic model consisted of several major components and most businesses that function according to this model retain most if not all of these

major components (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). These

components of the bureaucracy which consist of a hierarchal structure of authority, a

division of labor, shared values, a certain level of impersonality, rules, and a focus on

technical competence are linked explicitly together by the companies goals or objectives

(Weber, 1947; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In other words these bureaucratic components

which comprise a companies infrastructure enable the accomplishment of the

organizational goals (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). These goals

are usually stated formally within the organization's mandate or mission statement,

however, informal goals that have nothing to do with the mission and may in fact

contradict the formal goals can also exist within complex organizations (Jones, 1996).

Even though most complex organizations tend to have a bureaucratic

infrastructure, many researchers contend that this model is not perfect (Meyer & Rowan,

1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). In fact Glenn Morgan argues that within Max

Weber's model of bureaucracy there was the constant redefining of methods and

mechanisms within the infrastructure to help the organization better reach its goals

(1990). The author claims that because Weber's model suggest that organizations will

always make those necessary changes that will help them function more efficiently and

better reach their objectives, any notion of bureaucratic organizations as stagnant entities

is a great misconception (Morgan, 1990).

Peter Blau found in his study of some government agencies that certain

characteristics within an organizations infrastructure are often redefined (1965). For

example Blau discovered that within some agencies, many rules were either modified in

some way or completely disobeyed (1963). The author claims that though the rules set forth in the infrastructure of the organization were consistent with the agency's goals, in practice many of the rules were either "distorted or ignored" by the agents (Blau, 1963). The distortion and modification of these rules however were not viewed by agency supervisors as insubordination or insurrection. Instead supervisors understood that some of these informal changes helped the agents to function better within the organization, to complete tasks more efficiently, and to better achieve the formal objectives of the agency (Blau, 1963). Though researchers do not support or recommend in any way a total abandonment of formal structure, they do offer that an occasional "tweeking" of certain aspects of the infrastructure, such as organizational rules, is necessary if the bureaucratic model is expected to be successful in guiding an organization through the achievement of its goals (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America like other complex organizations possesses many of the major characteristics of a bureaucracy. Within the agency their is hierarchal system of authority with national directors, regional directors, and local program directors. There are also several standards and by-laws used in the governing of the agency. For example, one such rule is that for a child to be considered for the program, they must possess one or more at-risk factors such as being reared in a single parent family, low SES, consistently absences from school, or having scored low on standardized test (Furano, et.al., 1993). Another such rule concerning the selection of mentors requires that all adults interested in volunteering with the program pass a series of of criminal background checks. Such requirements help to insure the safety of the

children in the program (Furano, et.al., 1993; Sipe, 1999; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Undoubtedly there is an endless number of details involved in the running of Big Brothers Big Sisters, countless committees, committee chairs, programs, processes, procedures, rules, standards, and by-laws that comprise the infrastructure of such a complex organizations. However, for the sake of this research the author will only focus on certain aspects of the infrastructure, and they are the processes, practices, and standards that concern establishing and maintaining strong, positive mentor/mentee relationships.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters Mission

The goals of BBBS are plainly stated in the organization's mission which clearly proclaims that the major objective of the agency

> ...is to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth primarily through a professionally-supported, one-to-one relationship with a caring adult, and to assist them in achieving their highest potential as they grow to become confident, competent, and caring individuals by providing committed volunteers, national leadership and standards of excellence (BBBS, 2002).

The organization's vision is to "develop the resources, environment, and mechanisms" necessary to help them provide a caring committed adult for every child that is in need. To realize this vision, Big Brothers Big Sisters is committed to building on is century long legacy of excellence in transforming lives and enriching families, communities, and society.

Theoretically, every chapter of BBBS is dedicated to the charge of making a "positive difference in the lives of children and youth." However, the manner in which

individual chapters choose to execute this charge may vary. Some chapters may choose

to build coalitions with other service organizations such as churches, fraternities,

sororities, and lodges to help them accomplish the mission. Other chapters may choose to

keep the mentoring efforts strictly on a community based while yet others choose to

branch out and explore site-based mentoring possibilities. For example Big Brothers Big

Sisters in Champaign-Urbana utilizes community based as well as school based

mentoring methods to help achieve the national goals. And it is probably safe to assume

that while striving to achieve these objectives, each agency works within the guidelines of

the infrastructure put in place by the national office as well as the more

specialized frameworks are designed by local directors to suit the specific needs of each

individual chapter.

Ultimately, the components of the infrastructure - the numerous processes and

procedures, the director and committee chairs, and countless standards and guidelines -

both locally and nationally are all linked together for the purpose of achieving the

organization's national goal. As is has been previously stated, the manner in which goals

are achieved, if they are achieved at all, is strongly influenced by the infrastructure

(Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). For example, rigid adherence to

certain rules without exception or poor managerial techniques could for some

organizations hinder their ability to progress and achieves formal objectives. For this

reason, researchers suggest that within those organizations that are modeled as a

bureaucracy there must be room for constant development and refining of organizational

practices, standards, and management *i.e.* the infrastructure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977;

Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). Accordingly, the very structure and foundation of the organization can potentially obstruct the goals and objectives of the organization (Jones, 1996). In light of this it is necessary to examine the procedure, practices, rules, and guidelines of BBBS school-based mentoring program in Champaign-Urbana more carefully to assess how the program's local and national infrastructure impact the achievement of program goals.

An Ideal Infrastructure for Mentoring

An ideal model or design for a mentoring programs would be one that focused on establishing and maintaining strong positive bonds between youth and and caring adults. As it has been discussed, establishing strong bonds between mentors and mentees is the most challenging and crucial aspects of mentoring (Rhodes, 2002). A program such as the BBBS *School Buddies* program for example would strive to not just put "caring adults in the lives of children and youth" but to make sure that the adults and children would build a meaningful enduring relationship and the infrastructure of such a program would facilitate that relationship. Efforts would be made to help ensure that strong bonds between youth and volunteers develop and survive.

In an effort to accomplish this, the program structure would, ideally, focus on recruiting volunteers first from among the child's community and social network. Those mentors that come from the child's already established social network - what some researchers call natural mentors - have an easier time relating to and understanding that child and his/her environment (Rhodes, 1996; Davis, 1996). Also because mentors are

expected to help youth make use of the connections within their own communities (Rhodes, 2002), it would seem that this task would be more feasible if the mentor were actually from that community. Therefore, recruiting efforts would ideally begin within that youths' community with churches, neighborhood organizations, local business, and other service organizations.

Secondly, the structure and design of this ideal mentoring program would require extensive screening, through interviews, references, and background checks; intensive orientation through workshops and seminars that would occur before the match is made; and continued training and support that would take place after the match has been made and through out the duration of the mentor/mentee relationship. Grossman (1999) and Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan (2000) have found that mentor screening, orientation, training, support, and supervision are key components to any successful mentoring initiative. Jean Rhodes states that one of the best ways to ensure that a mentor/mentee relationship will be successful and run a "natural course" is to "carefully screen, train, and support the mentor during the course of the relationship (2002). In fact she states that those programs that function without these key factors have a very difficult time establishing and maintaining strong positive mentor/mentee relationships (Rhodes, 2002).

Lastly, an ideal infrastructure would enable the mentor to spend as much time as possible with the child and establish and maintain regular communication with the child's parents. Research has shown that the more time that volunteers spend with their protégés doing social activities, then the stronger and more enduring their bonds will be (Rhodes, 2002). Jean Rhodes found that engaging in academic as well as social activities, joint

decision making, and spending more than ten hours together per month are some key

factors that help positive mentoring relationships develop (2002). It has been found that

most mentoring programs encourage that mentors and mentees spend time together doing

a wide variety of things (Grossman, 1999). In fact programs like the *100 Black Men of

America* encourage their mentors to attend school and community events with their

mentees as a way to help strengthen their relationships (Dortch, 2000).

In addition to spending significant amounts of time together doing social and

academic activities an ideal mentoring model would also encourage and facilitate

interaction between the mentor and the child's parent(s). Thomas Dortch claims that

communication between the mentor and the parent(s) or guardian(s) is key to maintaining

the mentor/mentee relationship (2000). He also states that a mentor has to be sensitive to

the child's primary care givers and remember that the job of the mentor is to help

"enhance and stabilize" the child's environment and not disrupt the balance within the

family by trying to usurp the parent(s) or by trying to become the most important adult in

the child's life (Dortch, 2000). Dortch claims that within the *100 Black Men of America*

mentoring programs, volunteers are encouraged to communicate with the parents and

engage their input when making decision concerning the child because the family's

support is important to the success of the mentor/mentee relationship. Similar to the

efforts of the *100 Black Men*, the mentoring initiatives of the Windmere Boulevard

Elementary School also encourages contact between mentors and parents by instituting a

"Meet the Mentor" night for parents and volunteers and by suggesting that mentors

engage in community and social events with parents and protégés (Terry, 1999).

Among the flurry of research surrounding mentoring and the positive impact that caring non-relative adults have on the lives of at-risk youth, the role that parents play in the lives of these youth is often minimized (Rhodes, 2002). Rhodes points out however that it must be remembered that caring, sensitive parents are usually the ones responsible for putting their children in contact with these programs that can provide that extra helping hand (2002). The mentoring relationships that youth are exposed to are in large part "a function of the encouragement and opportunities that their parents provide" (Rhodes, 2002). Therefore minimizing the role that parents play not only in the lives of these youths but in the facilitating of the mentor/mentee relationship can be insulting to parents as well as limiting to the success of the mentor/mentee relationship (Rhodes, 2002).

Ideally, all mentoring programs would be structured in a way to incorporate those characteristics, such as training and mentor/parent interaction that would help to establish and maintain strong mentor mentee bonds. For example successful mentoring initiatives like the Windmere Boulevard Elementary School Program and those sponsored by the *100 Black Men of America* possess an infrastructure that seemingly integrates all of these components. However, it is unfortunate that the structure of many mentoring programs misses the mark. This research will therefore carefully examine the BBBS *School Buddies* program to assess how well its infrastructure facilitates the establishment and maintenance of strong mentor/mentee relationships which ultimately enables the agency to achieve the national objective of making a positive difference in the lives of youth through a one-to-one relationship with a caring adult.

History of Mentoring: Its Origins

Though the use of organized mentorship as a tool to improve the educational achievement and thus life chances of at-risk youth may be a recent phenomenon, the concept of mentoring has been around for several centuries. In fact the word mentor made its first appearance in Greek literature and mythology (Freedman, 1993). In Homer's the *Odyssey* Mentor is the name of a specific character (E.V. Rieu, trans., 1946). King Odysseus has to take an extended journey and in his absence, he asks his long-time, trusted friend Mentor to take care of his household. One of Mentor's major responsibilities in taking care of the household is to see to Odysseus's son Telemachus (E.V. Rieu, trans., 1946). Mentor is held responsible for making sure that Telemachus is properly educated and that all of his needs are met. Somewhere about midway through the story, the goddess Athena decides to impersonate Mentor (E.V. Rieu, trans., 1946). Goddess Athena as Mentor imparts wisdom and knowledge upon Telemachus while at the same time preparing him for an important life journey (E.V. Rieu, trans., 1946). As the story unfolds it is discovered how important Mentor's relationship with Telemachus was to the young man's personal growth and how much he benefited from Mentor's wisdom and advice (Freedman, 1993). Mentor was to Telemachus a teacher, guide, and friend. The nature of their relationship has had a strong influence in defining the role of mentors over the last several centuries (Freedman, 1993).

Definitions of Mentoring

The role of mentors and ideas of mentorship have been defined and redefined in

numerous ways since Homer's *Odyssey*. Such words as "protector, benefactor, sponsor, champion, advocate, supporter, counselor, patron, guide, and role model" are some of the catch phrases or sound-bites often used when describing mentors (Freedman, 1993). In 1993 the *Education Consumer Guide* defined mentoring as "a sustained relationship between a youth and an adult in which the adult offers support, guidance, and assistance" (1993). According to Uri Bronfenbrenner a mentor is usually "an older, more experienced person who seeks to further the development of character and competence in a younger person" (1993). One periodical describes mentors as "adults who assume quasi-parental roles as advisors and role models for young people to whom they are unrelated" (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). As it is discussed in the Department of Transportation *Mentoring Handbook*, mentors can facilitate personal as well as professional growth and that the process of mentoring is one in which a person can "open a passageway to knowledge by sharing ideas and information" (1996). Jean E. Rhodes describes a mentor as being a "relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated, younger protégé...a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the protégé" (2000). Overtime the mentor and protégé develop a bond built on "mutual commitment, respect, identification, and loyalty which facilitates the youth's transition in adulthood" (Rhodes, 2000). Mentoring has even been described as "a window of hope" that can show us a glimpse of our better selves and a better society (Freedman, 1993).

No matter how many different ways mentoring is defined, the basic concept always reaches back to its classical mythical roots in Homer's *Odyssey* (Freedman, 1993). According to Mark Freedman, whether it be seen in real life practices or in works of literature like the *Odyssey, Grimm's Brothers Iron John*, or even *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the role of mentors has three common foundational elements. These elements are achievement, nurturance, and generativity (1993).

Mentors offer achievement in that they encourage and motivate their protégés or mentees to accomplish tasks and reach set goals. The element of nurturance comes through in the mentor/mentee relationship in the way that mentors help their protégés to adjust and learn from life lessons and in the way they serve as guides who help usher their protégés into adulthood (Freedman, 1993). Generativity in mentorship is demonstrated through the fact that most mentoring relationships are intergenerational, an older more experienced person offering wisdom and insight to a younger less experienced person (Freedman, 1993). These fundamental elements can be seen in various descriptions of the characteristics of mentors.

According to a study by Jean Rhodes and Anita B. Davis some of the criteria for good mentors is "a person you can count on, someone who believes in and cares deeply for you, and who inspires you to do your best (1996). Author Amy Sullivan states that mentors are usually characterized by teaching and guiding, providing information or advice, giving direction to naive or inexperienced youth (1996). The Department of Transportation states in its *Mentoring Handbook* that successful mentors are

characterized as being supportive of protégés needs and aspirations, patient, respected, and seen as a positive role model (1996).

Variations in Mentoring Types and Methods

In addition to the varying definitions of mentoring, there are also differences in mentor types and mentoring methods. According to research there are two approaches to mentoring. The more traditional method of mentoring is one-on-one (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). In this type of mentoring relationship an older more experienced adult assumes a relationship with one youth . The advocacy approach however involves one adult that establishes a relationship with the same group of young people over an extended period of time (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992).

Within these different approaches there are also different types of mentors. The two most basic kinds of mentors are planned and natural (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Rhodes and Davis, 1996). Planned mentors usually come in the form of volunteers who through planned programs mentor youth. These volunteers are usually not related to the mentees but are concerned citizens who wish to make a significant impact in a young persons life (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988). Natural mentors however are not assigned through planned programs; they are usually members of the youths' already established social unit. They come in the form of grandmothers, aunts, neighbors, or church members (Rhodes & Davis, 1996) The natural mentor relationship unlike planned mentor relationships occurs naturally and are not forced or restricted based on program designs or policies (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988).

Within planned mentoring there are generally two specific types, community based and site based. Community based mentoring is the more traditional type where volunteers from the community pick their mentees up from their homes to attend planned events or just spend time together (Rhodes, 2002). Site-based mentoring is different in that the mentors and mentees always meet at a designated place and their interaction is restricted to that place such as schools, churches, and community centers (Rhodes, 2002). School-based programs fall in the category of site-based mentoring. It can be defined as a kind of mentoring where volunteers meet with mentees for at least one hour per week, on school grounds and participate in social and/or academic activities (BBBS, 2000; Herrera, 1999).

Accordingly school-based mentoring has the potential to put more disadvantaged youth in contact with positive caring adults. School-based mentoring programs for one put volunteers right in the school system and can therefore reach those students who don't have access to community based program (BBBS, 2000). School based programs are also more cost efficient than community based programs (Herrera, 1999; BBBS, 2000); (Rhodes, 2002). Additionally school based programs appeal to those adults who because of family and work commitments would not pursue community based programs (Herrera, 1999; BBBS, 2000;Rhodes, 2002). School based mentors spend about half as much time with their protégés as community based programs and since mentors meet their protégés on school grounds concerns about safety are alleviated (Herrera, 1999; BBBS, 2000; Rhodes, 2002).

For the purpose of this study no specific definition of mentoring is being used. Because all of those which have been previously mentioned are very similar, the meaning of mentoring for this study will be designed from the collection. This author will therefore take the meaning of mentor from the collage listed above and define the term as *a person, usually older who spends time with a younger person serving as a teacher, coach, champion, advocate, and/or friend and offers when necessary support, encouragement, advice, and/or a listening ear.* This research will also focus on school-based mentoring, however, some comparison will be made between it and community based. The definition for school based mentoring which will be used in this research will concentrate on that one which is discussed directly above.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Promises of Mentoring

Since the beginning of the mentoring movement more and more research has been produced to offer understanding and gauge the benefits of mentoring as well as discover methods of improving such programs. Initially much of the literature on mentoring only focused on the benefits and portrayed mentoring as a magical remedy that could "save" America's wayward youth (Freedman, 1993). Although this information may have generated a great deal of enthusiasm, there still remained many unanswered questions and a valuable lessons to be learned about the effectiveness of mentoring (Freedman, 1993). More recently, studies have been done that try to address those unanswered questions. Research has sought to sift through the myths and get to the realities of mentoring, to discover and analyze shortcomings and offer suggestions for improvement.

One major belief about mentoring that seems to be a common theme of the literature is that mentors can make a difference in the lives of young people (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992; Freedman, 1993; Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988; Rhodes, 1992; Grossman and Gary, 1997; Furano, et. al., 1993; Edleman, 1999; Taylor and Bressler, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). It is claimed by researchers that young people can often times cite an older person who came into their lives either through school or special programs and offered guidance and helped them to make critical decisions about their lives and futures (Higgins, 1988; Rhodes, 2002). Accordingly almost every adult that has

succeeded and overcome adversity has had the benefit of a caring adult that served as a mentor and role model (Freedman, 1993).

Mentoring is believed to be especially important for poor at-risk urban youth because it has the potential to completely change their lives and give them hope for the future (Freedman, 1993). According to sociologist James Coleman inner-city youth are lacking access to something he calls "social capital" (1987). Loosely translated social capital refers to particular norms, skills, and values passed on from one generation to the next. These norms and values are usually those that are legitimated by the larger society. Well educated individuals for example are usually considered to have a high degree of social capital (Coleman, 1987). As homes and family structures continuously change in our society, it is believed that children have less access to social capital. This deficiency could be absorbed in the community however poor inner city youth are at more of a disadvantage here (Coleman, 1987; Rhodes, 2002). Jean Rhodes points out that many middle class families are able to purchase positive adult contact and care through placing their kids in after school programs, athletic clubs, summer camps, music lessons and other enriching extra curricular activities (2002). For the parents who have money readily available they can even place their children under the care of a therapist. Due to limitations in opportunity and finances, these options are not always plausible for low-income inner city families (Rhodes, 2002). According to Coleman due to the drug infestation and violence of the inner city social capital is in major decline (1987). Large percentages of youths living in inner cities have witnessed some kind of violent act such

as a beating or killing. Some researchers have even compared the inner city to war zones (Freedman, 1993).

Though this parallel is a bit extreme, it has served in helping to paint a definite picture of inner city youth and the benefits that mentoring could afford them. These young people are characterized as living in personal and moral isolation, yearning for and in need of adult attention, growing up without pro-social influences and cut off from mainstream society (Freedman, 1993). Research suggests that mentoring efforts could be especially beneficial for this population of America's youth (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988). It is believed that through mentoring these young people can be re-connected to mainstream society, receive caring adult attention and thus replace social capital (Freedman, 1993).

Most of the research generated about mentoring programs has stressed that one of the major benefits of such programs is that they offer youth an opportunity to interact with positive adult influences that can serve as role models. Studies have shown that forming a bond with a caring adult can make a significant difference in the lives of youth as they develop socially, mentally, physically, and emotionally and as they approach adulthood (Taylor, 1989). Roland Taylor states that a relationship with a role model is important in the psychological development of African-American youth (1989). According to the author, young African-Americans as they are being confronted with the "prospects of choice and decision of preparing for adult status and responsibilities" are seeking those who would serve as a source of "guidance into an identity not clearly defined" (Taylor 1989). Therefore, as Taylor points out, role models, mentors, advisors

and any adult that can provide a sort of life model for youth are key in nurturing and cultivating certain features of their personal and social identities (1989).

Author Jean E. Rhodes discussed many of the promises that planned mentoring can offer in her book *Stand By Me: The Risks and Rewards of Today's Youth* (2002). Rhodes claims that mentoring programs can go along way in contributing to adolescents' emotional and social growth (2002). Mentors can for example offer advice and guidance to youth when it comes to decision making and can help to reinforce some of the beliefs and morals of the youths' parents. Mentors can also serve as advocates for at-risk youth by offering more access to positive adults and open doors to new opportunities (Rhodes, 2002). Additionally, mentors can help youth re-conceptualize ideas about their futures and help make academic and professional advances more of a reality by serving as a concrete example of career success. Mentors can offer for to insecure youth better stress coping strategies and help them develop more effective ways of dealing with positive and negative emotions (Rhodes, 2002). Overall, Rhodes points through her research that mentoring can help at-risk youth improve their self-esteem, attitudes toward life, behavior, and relationships with parents as well as peers (2002).

Further studies have also shown that adolescent youth as they begin to redefine themselves and their relationships with their parents could benefit greatly from a relationship with an older, caring non-relative (Rutter, 1987; Rhodes, 2002). Additionally relationships with mentors or role models could offer a sense of security that some youth for whatever reasons are not able to obtain with their parents (Ainsworth, 1989). According to Shepherd Zeldin, in order for youth to successfully maneuver

adolescence they need the benefit of caring adults and safe havens where they can freely discuss sensitive issues (1995). It is believed that mentoring can provide these safe havens with caring adults (Rhodes, 2002).

These kinds of relationships are particularly important for disadvantaged youth that are living in poverty. According to Bernard Lefkowitz, overwhelmingly, those youth who have managed to pull themselves out of poverty and make a better life for themselves had the benefit of a caring adult mentor (1986). All of these findings have helped to demonstrate the importance of a mentor in the lives of poor, at-risk youth and give some idea of the possible benefits that such relationships can offer to this segment of America's youth. Yet despite these possible benefits, it must be remembered that mentoring does have its shortcomings, many of which of which will be examined more carefully in the following pages.

Limitations of Mentoring

Though it may be accepted that all youth benefit from close relationships with and support from caring adults and that mentors can serve in that capacity, it is not agreed upon as to how this relationship should occur. As it was stated in part one of this paper, there are two kinds of mentoring - natural and planned. Since the mentoring movement began there has been some debate as to which method is most beneficial for youth, particularly at-risk minority youth. According to Jean E. Rhodes and Anita B. Davis, most adolescents who have adjusted and done well in life despite extreme circumstance

and stressful situations "often attribute their success to the influence of a natural mentor, such as a special aunt, neighbor, or teacher" (1996).

In a study of urban, pregnant or parenting African-American and Latina adolescent girls, Rhodes and Davis found the role of the non-parent adult to be quite significant. When these young girls were asked if there was an adult besides the person who brought them up, who they could count on for support and guidance, forty-five percent of them nominated natural mentors (1996). According to Rhodes and Davis these natural mentors emerged from the girls already existing social network or support system. They ranged from "boyfriends female relatives to their grandmothers, aunts and uncles, older friends, sisters, teachers, church staff, counselors and neighbors (1996). The majority of these girls' natural mentors were women and over half lived in the same neighborhoods with the girls. Also almost all of the mentors (95%) had contact with the girls at least once per week (Rhodes and Davis, 1996).

In an effort to more accurately assess the importance and benefits of natural mentoring verses planned mentoring, Rhodes and Davis began conducting a longitudinal study of low-income pregnant and parenting girls who were paired with volunteer mentors. Even though the study had not been completed, the authors' preliminary results bring up some interesting questions about planned mentoring. Rhodes and Davis found that, though some of the assigned mentor/mentee relationships were quite successful, "volunteer relationships may not be as influential or enduring as those that occur naturally" (1996). For example, a significant number of the volunteer relationships that were examined ended only after a few months. Additionally some of the girls felt that

their mentor was out of touch with them, their experiences, and their problems (Rhodes and Davis, 1996). According to Hamilton and Hamilton because mentoring programs try to "synthesize a relationship known to be potent only when it occurs naturally" planned mentoring efforts are rooted in a paradox (1992). Planned mentoring programs are asked if a program can actually be designed that will have effects similar to those of natural mentoring (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992).

Erwin Flaxman, Carol Ascher, and Charles Harrington believe that planned mentoring "should be considered a modest intervention (1988). Planned mentoring, unlike natural mentoring has a very limited power in its ability to substitute for the missing adults in a young persons life. "It occurs too infrequently and is not intense enough to do for these youth what natural mentoring is reputed to do" (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988). Rhodes and Davis suggest that as an alternative to planned mentoring, a more effective type of intervention would be to teach youth how to recruit support from caring adults that exist within their own social networks (1996).

Overwhelmingly the biggest challenge of planned mentoring programs is actually helping to facilitate a successful relationship between their at-risk youth and adult volunteers, to help them establish and maintain a close personal bond (Freedman, 1993; (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988; Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992; McPartland and Nettles 1991; Styles and Morrow, 1992). There are several factors that can hinder the establishment of promising, successful mentor/mentee relationships. One of these factors is commitment *(i.e.* time, consistent interest and interaction). Freedman (1993), Hamilton and Hamilton (1992), and Herrera (1999) have all stated that time is one of the major

deterrents for adults who wish to participate in mentoring programs. According to Marc Freedman generally speaking mentors are much more successful at "signing up than showing up" (1993). Hamilton and Hamilton state that this is yet another part of the mentoring paradox (1992).

Jean E. Rhodes points to the fact that many mentoring relationships volunteers don't manage to maintain their commitment to youth (2002). She states that lack of commitment and inconsistency in mentoring can harm youth by increasing insecurity and lack of trust. When contact between mentors and protégés begin to wane and eventually stop, many youth begin to internalize the situation and believe that they've done something to cause their mentors to dislike or lose interest in them (Rhodes, 2002). Rhodes claims that these kinds of disruptive mentoring relationships are extremely traumatic for vulnerable youth (2002). Accordingly, youth that are a part of this kind of mentoring experience are worse off than those youth who never become involved in a mentoring relationship at all (Rhodes, 2002). Rhodes, also cautions that a volunteer's level of commitment must be sincere and that he or she must understand that no meaningful relationship develops overnight. Volunteers of planned mentoring programs often expect that their protégés will begin trusting and confiding in them almost immediately, however, Rhodes explains that this is an unrealistic expectation. She claims that volunteers must be reminded that mentoring relationships just like any other need time and effort to develop properly (2002).

Bonds with caring, wise adults that occur "naturally" are the result of a gradual process of youth and adult becoming closer through constant contact. Because of the

hectic lives of both youths and adults and the limited amount of time available to adult volunteers, it is questioned whether or not planned programs can replicate this gradual process (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). Adults mentors have to contend with "competing commitments" and "countervailing forces" (Freedman, 1993). It is due to these commitments and forces that even successful well established programs like BBBS struggle to find adult volunteers for the forty thousand youth on their waiting list (Freedman, 1993).

Another problem besides time commitment is maintaining interest. Freedman (1993) as well as Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington (1988) point out that a great deal of the literature surrounding mentoring only point to the positive aspects. Freedman says that few researchers have pointed to the simple reality that "mentoring is hard work" (1993). Mentors experience a great shock in dealing with these young people and are immediately put to an endurance test (Freedman, 1993). Obviously some mentors pass while others fail. Many of those who experience frustration or guilt because they can't reach the youth or gain the desired results become disinterested and often times give up. It becomes too difficult to try to sustain the relationship when they feel they are having no impact on the lives of the youth (McPhartland & Nettles, 1991).

Another limitation of planned mentoring that effects mentor/mentee bonds is class differences. Marc Freedman states that in addition to time, social distance is a problem that makes it difficult for mentors and mentees to connect. As previously stated mentoring from its very beginning revolved mostly around middle class volunteerism. (Beiswinger, 1985); (Freedman, 1993). When the movement began and picked up

momentum in the late nineteen eighties things were no different; mentoring still centered

around reconnecting poor disadvantaged youth with the mainstream through middle class

vlounteerism (Freedman, 1993).

Mentors however have discovered since the beginning of the movement that

making this connection is not the easiest thing to do. Accordingly there exists between

the worlds of the mentor and poor youth a "great gulf" and in order for meaningful

relationships to be established they must first work to "bridge this divide" (Freedman,

1993). According to Jean Rhodes of all of the obstacles that could exist between a

mentor and protégé including issues of race, gender and ethnicity, class is probably the

one of the most challenging to overcome (2002). Part of the challenge lies in the fact that

the middle-class world of the volunteer can seem quite distant and unfamiliar to a poor

urban youth (Rhodes, 2002). Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington point out that often times

in settings where middle class adults are trying to mentor urban youths, the mentors world

can seem to the adolescents, "irrelevant and nonsensical" and "their goals for the mentees

naive" (1988).

Additionally, in the preliminary results of the study done by Rhodes and Davis, it

was found that young girls who were paired with mentors found the adults to be "out of

touch with their experiences and problems" (1996). This lack of understanding and

connection is according to Freedman, due to the fact that the "role-models" that are

chosen as mentor often have very little in common with the young people they are

working with (1993). Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington credit the success of many

natural mentoring relationships to the fact that mentors and mentees have something in

common with each other; the relationships occur between individuals in the same environment who do not have that much social distance between them" (1988).

According to a study done by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, probably the most difficult group of young people for mentors to reach and connect with is urban African-American teenagers. Efforts to reconnect them to mainstream society are ineffective because "mainstream society has virtually no credibility with these young people" (MEE Report, 1992). Accordingly, these young African-Americans are completely "alienated from their heritage" and are accepted by a subculture that doesn't acknowledge many mainstream norms but "tolerates self-destructive behavior and encourages taking risks" (MEE Report, 1992). Naturally it would be difficult for these youth to perceive middle class mentors as having relevance in their existence. Rhodes and Davis suggest that perhaps adults who "live and work in the urban communities and who are familiar with the circumstances confronting youth" would be more successful at establishing bonds and working with urban, disadvantaged youth. Accordingly, these adults would be better at offering advice that is "consistent with the cultural norms, options, and constraints of a given setting" (1996). Due to these discoveries it is suggest that the effects of social distance be strongly considered in mentor/mentee relationships (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988).

According to Furano, et. al., BB/BS agencies, in an effort to address the social gap between their mentors and mentees and increase diversity among their volunteers, have begun trying to recruit mentors from lower income backgrounds (1993). BBBS has traditionally attracted volunteers with a college education and middle to upper middle

class background. These characteristics have created a misconception about who is qualified to become mentors, which discourages many lower SES adult from volunteering. In understanding this some BBBS agencies have begun to court working class volunteers with the belief that they would better understand what some of the youth are experiencing. However, despite their efforts to diversify, and address the social gap between their youth and mentors, BBBS agencies by and large still "continue to rely on middle-class, college educated whites to serve as volunteers" (Furano, et. al., 1993).

Aside from making efforts to recruit more low- income volunteers, BBBS agencies have also made efforts to recruit more minority volunteers. Attracting minority volunteers is a problem not only for BBBS agencies but also for other planned mentoring organizations as well (Furano, et. al., 1993). According to Furano, mentoring opportunities are usually advertised by word of mouth, however, several BBBS agencies have sought out minority volunteers by contacting black radio stations, black churches, and men's clubs (1993). Agencies that have had the most success with minority recruitment were those agencies that involved minority staff and administration in the recruitment efforts (Furano, et. al., 1993). Only limited progress has been made and consequently there is still a significant lack of minority volunteers leaving most minority youth in BB/BS programs matched with white mentors (Furano, et. al., 1993).

Another factor that can limit mentoring is volunteer expectations. Much of the literature surrounding the mentoring movement has focused on mentor expectations and perceptions and how this affects the length and quality of the mentor/mentee relationship. Firstly, the at-risk youth in need of mentoring are depicted as needing to be "saved" from

negative influences, violence, poor social structures, lack of adult guidance, and themselves. When the movement began in the late eighties journalist were depicting American youth as possibly becoming another "lost generation" and that if they were to be "saved" responsible caring adults would have to step in (Freedman, 1993). Therefore, mentors often come to the relationship with their own agenda and ideas about what should happen and how things should progress. According to a study of four Linking Lifetimes Programs, conducted by Melanie Style and Kristine Morrow, these expectations and characteristics of the volunteers are partly to blame for the high termination rate of adult/youth relationships that is prevalent in most mentoring programs. Accordingly these volunteers that have successful relationships with youth let them play an active part in determining the direction of the relationship while some less successful volunteers tend to approach the relationship with their own ideas and rigid agenda already set in place (Styles & Morrow, 1992).

Styles and Morrow found that mentors who held great expectations of extreme gratitude and complete transformation of their youth were "typically very disappointed" (1992). Freedman states that many mentors have to accept that they may never make a significant impact in a young persons life. Because of the seriousness of the circumstances that put them at-risk a mentors influence can be very limited (Freedman, 1993). Even those mentors that have established very strong bonds with their protégés have to understand that the youths' lives are not easily transformed (Schuldt, 1990). It is important that volunteers realize these limitations before attempting to enter into a mentor/mentee relationship.

Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington caution that "mentoring is not a panacea for the problems of youth, particularly at-risk youth...Mentors cannot pluck adolescents out of poor homes or disruptive communities" (1988). If these limitations and realities about mentoring are not expressed, there is a strong possibility of dire consequences for the youth as well as the adult volunteers. When adults enter into mentor/mentee relationships with great expectations that are never realized they often experience guilt and frustration (Freedman, 1993). When the relationships do not render the desired results, mentors often feel let down and lose interest all together. Upon losing interest they often terminate the relationships claiming that they were ineffectual and couldn't make a difference (Furano, et. al., 1993). For the youth, once the adults have abandoned the relationship, then they are left with feelings of doubt and disappointment. This kind of disappointment can make youth resistant to adult intervention and less likely to trust adults. Being involved in failed mentor/mentee relationships of this nature can therefore be worse for at-risk youth than never being involved in mentoring at all (Freedman, 1993) (Rhodes, 2002). Freedman suggests that mentors must be realistic about the youth they are working with and their goals. They must understand initial resistance, become thick skinned enough not to take things like unreturned phone calls and missed meeting personally (1993).

Similarly, Jean E. Rhodes cautions that volunteers, program organizers, and parents must also be aware that all youth are not cut out to have planned mentors (2002). Despite the belief that all young people can benefit from the influence of a kind caring adult, Rhodes states that planned mentoring may not be the best alternative for all youth

(2002). The author states that some youth may be a little too sophisticated to respond to planned mentoring and find the relationship to contrived and insincere (Rhodes, 2002). She also explains that for those youth who have serious emotional and behavioral problems mentoring can not be expected to make that much of a difference; these youths are in need of more professional care that a volunteer may not be able to provide (Rhodes, 2002). Also Rhodes states that no mentor can expect to replace the love and support afforded to youth through close relationships with parents, extended family members, pastors, teachers, neighbors, and friends (2002).

An additional limitation to mentoring programs can be seen within the overall structure and practices of the program. Jean E. Rhodes cautions that many of the problems surrounding planned mentoring could possibly be decreased if not eliminated if programs were properly structured (2002). Most scholars agree that in order for planned mentoring efforts to be effective certain elements must be present within the structure of the program (Rhodes, 2002; Herrera, et.al., 2000; Sipe, 1998). Accordingly there are three essential factors that can determine the success of a mentoring program: (a) screening, (b) orientation and training, and (c) support and supervision. Jean Rhodes points out that if one or more of these essentials is missing from a program then it becomes more difficult to help create successful and enduring mentor/mentee relationships (2002). Those programs however that can attempt to ensure longevity in mentor/mentee relationships by offering proper training, screening, structured activities for volunteers and youth, frequent contact with matches as well as parents, and consistent

monitoring of the overall implementation and practices of the program, will see stronger

and more long term effects.

Actual Benefits of Mentoring

Despite all of the limitations, frustrations, and cautions surrounding mentoring,

advocates of planned mentoring programs still claim that these relationships can have

long- term positive effects on a young persons life. A strong mentoring relationship can

potentially supply information and opportunities, open doors, provide nurturing and

support, help youth cope with adversity and difficulties and ultimately prepare youth for

adulthood (Freedman, 1993). Strong relationships with adult mentors can also improve a

youth's school attendance, academic achievement, attitude toward school, parents and

other adults, as well as reduce drug and alcohol abuse (Grossman & Garry, 1997).

Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington claim that planned mentoring can positively effect at-

risk youth in two important ways; "it can improve the social chances of tenacious and

disadvantaged youth by giving them resources they might not have had, and it can give

them some psychosocial support for new behaviors, attitudes, and ambitions...this support

can help some of the contradictions of moving into the mainstream society" (1988).

Over the last few years, researchers have gone a long way to provide more

quantitative as well as qualitative data that proves the benefits of mentoring. In a

Public/Private Ventures evaluation of eight BBBS agencies, researchers found that at-risk

youth who were active in mentoring programs performed better in school and in social

settings than those at-risk youth who were not involved in the program (Tierney &

Grossman, 1995). The study found that the mentored youth were forty-six percent less likely to initiate drug use and twenty-seven percent less likely to initiate alcohol use than those youth who were not mentored (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). Mentored youth also skipped half as many days of school and were one-third less likely to hit someone than those youth without mentors. Tierney and Grossman also discussed in their study that mentored youth felt more competent in regards to school work, skipped fewer classes, and gained modest improvement in grades. These improvements were particularly strong among minority girls (1995). Additionally the study also showed that mentored youth had shown improvements in relationships with parents and with peers; these results were strongest among minority boys (Tierney and Grossman, 1995).

In another study of six Campus Partners in Learning programs conducted by sponsored by Public/Private Ventures, Joseph Tierney and Alvia Branch fount that the young people involved gained improvements as well. The programs were successful in exposing the mentees to more "social, cultural, and recreational opportunities." The mentored youth also gained improvement in their "sense of control over their own live" (Tierney & Branch, 1992).

Additionally, in a study conducted by Jerlando Jackson and Jerry Matthews of Auburn University's Target Success Mentor Program, researchers found that youth experienced several improvements and that "the program made a positive impact on the mentees' lives" (1999). The program, which targets African-American males from Auburn Jr. High School, successfully helped to retain its mentees in public school and help them make the transition to high school. The youth also gained intellectual and

personal development from interaction with mentors as well as through educationally beneficial enrichment seminars (Jackson & Matthews, 1999).

Carla Herrera in a study of two school based mentoring programs in Jacksonville, Florida and Green County, Oklahoma found similar results of mentored at-risk youth. Participants who had been involved in the school based programs in Green County and Jacksonville from six months to a year showed considerable progress both socially and academically. Research shows that these students' attitudes towards school and teachers changed for the better. Their behavior in class improved and the participants' grades improved as they became more motivated about school and learning (Herrera, 1999). Students showed an overall positive response to being in the program and were actually proud of having a mentor. As one of the mentors stated, the program has given some youths "bragging rights" (Herrera, 1999). The data collected from the Green County and Jacksonville programs show that students formed strong bonds with their mentors, which helped to foster improvements in their attitudes, behavior, self-esteem, and academic achievement. Also the structure of the program within the school helped to serve as a support system for the mentor and mentee which contributed to the overall stability and success of the program (Herrera, 1999).

In a study of a pilot school/community mentoring program at Windmere Boulevard School in Amherst, NY, researchers found that the program, which involved at-risk students between the ages of seven and eleven and local members of the Rotary Club, was extremely beneficial for both students and volunteers (Terry, 1999). The author states that both students and volunteers greatly enjoyed the experience, however,

more research will be conducted to gain a better sense of the academic and social benefits that the program offers to the students (Terry, 1999)

In another study conducted by Jongyeun Lee and Bonnie Cramond, it was discovered that students who were mentored when compared to students on the waiting list had improved their aspirations due to the positive mentoring experience (1999). It was also found that the longer the students were mentored the more their aspirations concerning school and their futures improved. The researchers suggest in this article that for these relationships to be of any real benefit to students, mentors must commit at least one year to their protégé (Lee & Cramond, 1999).

Similarly in a study entitled *The Impact of Mentoring on the Academic Achievement of At-Risk Youth*, researchers examined twenty-five boys involved with BBBS of the Midlands (Thompson & Kelley-Vance, 2001). There were twelve of the young men in the treatment group (*i.e.* had a mentor) and thirteen of them were in the control group (*i.e.* were on the waiting list). The two groups were compared based on academic achievement and those in the treatment group made considerable higher academic gains than those in the control group (Thompson & Kelley-Vance, 2001). Those youth that had mentors scored higher in reading and math on the standardized test called the K-TEA than those students without mentors (Thompson & Kelley-Vance, 2002).

Other studies have shown that mentors helps students to improve in school and receive better grades, establish goals and aspirations for their academic and professional futures, and increase self-esteem (Nasrallah, 1992; Green, 1993; Morgan, 1993).

Researchers have also found that mentoring is a promising educational approach for those students who need more one on one attention (Lee, 1995) and at-risk students who have the advantage of a positive mentoring experience complete more years in education than those at-risk youth without mentors (Torrance, 1984).

In a more recent study Rhodes, Grossman, and Rech, examined some of the emotional and social benefits of mentoring (2000). The authors found that positive mentoring relationships led to improved levels of intimacy, trust and communication between the adolescents and their parents. The study also revealed that these improvements "led to positive changes in a wide array of areas such as the adolescents' sense of self-worth and scholastic achievement" (Rhodes, et.al., 2000).

<div align="center">Benefits and African-American Youth</div>

There is no data that specifically examines the effects of mentoring programs on African-American and other minority youth. Nor is there any research that compares mentored minority youth to mentored white youth. Most programs examine the overall effects of the programs and the benefits gained by all mentored youth. As discussed in the previous sections mentoring efforts have benefited many at-risk youth and afforded them social as well as academic development. Because so many of the planned mentoring programs serve a significant number of African-American and other minority youth through this at-risk population, it is quite plausible to conclude that minority youth are among those benefiting from these programs. For example, according to Carla Herrera, the school based mentoring programs in Jacksonville and Green County

Oklahoma served quite a large number of minority students, and the majority of the students involved benefited both socially and academically (Herrera, 1999).

BB/BS agencies in an effort to better serve the increasing number of diverse students being referred to them have made note of several interesting facts concerning their minority youth. Furano found in their study of eight BB/BS agencies, that minority youth wait much longer to be matched with a mentor than their white counterparts (1993). Among this group minority male are the most difficult to match. Additionally seventy-six percent of the youth in this study that had mentors were in "cross race" matches (Furano, et. al., 1993). According to the study white youth were very seldom, if ever, matched with minority adults. There were no noted differences in benefits between minority youth in cross-race matched and minority youth in same race matches (Furano, et. al., 1993).

In addition to the differences noted in the BBBS study several researchers have examined mentoring programs that are designed specifically for at-risk African-American youth. Lee David Bush in a case study of a mentoring program for fourth and fifth grade African-American male students found that the majority of students involved in the mentoring program had a positive change in their attitudes toward school, behavior at home and at school, and in their self-worth. The study also shows that the majority of students involved in the program made significant gains in their Stanford Achievement Test scores (1994). The research also revealed how adult mentors were able to "give the youth positive expectations about themselves and their future, linking the importance of schoolwork to their unfolding lives" (Bush, 1994). Mentors were also able to help their

mentees "believe in themselves and their abilities" as well as teach them how to be responsible (Bush, 1994).

Also as previously mentioned the youth who participated in Auburn University's Target Success Program, which is geared specifically toward African-American males from Auburn Jr. High School, benefited both socially and academically form the program and through interaction with their mentors (Jackson & Matthews, 1999). Additionally McPartland and Nettles found in their evaluation of Project RAISE, that the large number of minority students served though this program did make some positive steps toward improving academically (1991). Though there was no significant impact on grades, school attendance, and standardized test scores, students' behavior was improved through the RAISE program. These improvements can be viewed as initial steps in the sequence of steps needed to improve the students' educational chances as they matriculate through school and the RAISE program (McPartland & Nettles, 1991).

Other studies of mentoring programs designed specifically for African-American youth examine common characteristics of successful programs. In *The Case for Community Based Programs that Inform and Motivate Black Youth*, Ronald Ferguson found several similarities among the more than twenty community based programs examined in this study (1990). Some of the common themes that existed among these programs were the idea of the extended family. The youth were involved with mentors who were caring and trustworthy and who treated them like a part of their families (Ferguson, 1990). These adults were also consistent in their activity, commitment, and interaction with the youth. Some of the common goals pursued by these programs

included offering youth positive options, teaching strategies for pursuing those options as well as skills for implementing strategies (Ferguson, 1990). The programs were able to implement the goals and achieve the desired outcomes "through combinations of teaching, caring, providing, and manipulating the youth's environment so that it nurtures him more positively" (Ferguson, 1990).

These studies confirm that African-Americans as well as other minority youth, when involved in well-established mentoring relationships can benefit greatly. There may, undoubtedly, be differences in the way that minority youth interact with mentors, in the methods in which minority youth are matched with mentors, and even in the needs of at-risk minority youth. However, these differences do not have to preclude minority youth from benefiting from mentoring programs. In the following section several methods of improvement will be discussed which can possibly address these differences and make mentoring programs more beneficial for African-American and other minority at-risk youth.

Areas for Development

Mentor Perceptions

As discussed in this paper, research has proven that mentoring programs have a long way to go in fully addressing the needs of at-risk youth. None of these programs, despite their many benefits, are perfect; most of them could do a great deal more in reaching and serving their youth, particularly their minority youth. The following pages will address the shortcomings of mentoring in relation to serving minority at-risk

populations and attempt to offer possible solutions that could be beneficial not just to minority youth, but all at-risk youth.

It has been expressed throughout most out the literature concerning planned mentoring that among the basic objectives of such programs is the goal to socialize at-risk youth, help them to accept pro-social behavior, and reconnect them to mainstream society. Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington (1988), Freedman (1993), and Sullivan (1996) just to name a few have all cited these objectives in their research on planned mentoring. Many mentors in recognizing these goals begin to perceive that their duty is to "save" the youth, by rescuing them from harmful environments and negative influences (Freedman, 1993). Undoubtedly the mentors' understanding of their duties is due in part to the way in which research depicts the at-risk, urban youth that mentoring programs seek to serve. As it has been mentioned before the at-risk youth that are targeted by mentoring programs are portrayed as living in violent, drug infested, war zones where they are isolated from mainstream society and caring adults (Freedman, 1993). They are a part of communities where "social capital" is practically nonexistent (Coleman, 1987).

Whether or not these depictions are extreme and based partly on biases remains a matter of opinion. However, their potential to influence volunteers' understanding and perceptions of the youth they are working with and their duties to those youth is quite significant. One must ask how these perceptions influence the way that mentors interact with their mentees. How do they impact the mentors' methods of achieving the goals of socialization and reconnection to mainstream society? These perceptions may have implications and the way that they influence volunteers may have implications concerning

why some mentoring relationships fail and why some mentors find it hard to establish a bond with their mentees.

Lee David Bush points out in his study that the most successful mentor/mentee relationships were those in which emotional bonds were established and feelings of affections, caring, and genuine love existed between youth and adult (1994). Bush also states that "the greatest strides are made when the mentors truly enjoy spending time with the youth, rather than feeling compelled to *save the youth*" (1994). This finding suggests that mentors have to be disabused of the idea that they are "saviors" that must rescue youth. As Freedman points out, love is one of the most important factors in any mentoring relationship (1993). Of course it is unrealistic to expect love to already exist between a youth and adult who are complete strangers. The feelings of love and affection must develop overtime through consistent interaction and contact (Bush, 1994; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992). However, in the meantime, while mentors are waiting for the relationships to develop, they could limit the possibility of creating more barriers by perceiving and presenting themselves as vehicles for opportunity rather than saviors trying to run to their youths' rescue. As Amy Sullivan points out the key is "listening...understanding,...and accepting" not knowing all the answering, giving the perfect advice, or saving the day (1996).

Additionally, mentors notions of saving and rescuing youth could cause them to inadvertently devalue their mentors' communities, environments, life-styles, and cultures. Mentors, in their efforts to free youth from the influences of drugs, gangs, and violence and help them to accept more pro-social behaviors, may come across to the youth as

being critical of who they are and where they come from (Styles and Morrow, 1992).

True enough there are several negative influences for youth in inner cities, however,

negative influences can exist just as easily in the suburbs, or a small town. It should not

be assumed that there are no positive or uplifting aspects of the child's environment, that

there is no goodness in the inner city. Mentors should realize that there are some positive

aspects of the child's community and culture and draw on those in their efforts to

"socialize" at-risk youth.

Educator Gloria Ladson-Billings describes culturally relevant teaching as a

method for improving academic achievement and educational attainment among African-

American students. Accordingly, this approach "uses students' culture in order to

maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture...it...empowers

students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to

impart knowledge, skill, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This same cultural

relevance approach can be useful in mentoring programs as well. As mentors and

program organizers work to socialize at-risk minority youth and teach them "pro-social"

behaviors, it is important that these lessons be taught within the context of their

communities, cultures, and environments. Volunteers should draw on the youths' cultural

experiences to enhance goals and make them more relevant to the youth's existence.

Some programs that are designed specifically for minority youth have already

discovered this kind of "culturally relevant mentoring" For example, the Chicago based

Umoja Mentorship program uses African and African-American culture in its structure

and teachings to build self-esteem and promote leadership among African-American

youth (Umoja Mentorship Volunteer, personal communication, October 2000). The

program through different cultural lessons and activities try to address the needs of the

youth and prepare them to deal with the issues that they confront daily in the public

schools (Umoja Mentorship Volunteer, personal communication, October 2000). More

mainstream programs like BBBS could benefit from using more "culturally relevant"

mentoring. Drawing on youth's cultural experiences could help volunteers and program

organizers transcend barriers of race and class and better serve their entire at-risk youth

population.

Drawing on these cultural and community influences could also be beneficial in

helping mentors connect with youth. For example, Styles and Morrow found in their

study entitled *Understanding How Youth and Elders Form Relationships,* that those

mentor/mentee relationships that were most successful involved mentors who were aware

of and sensitive to environmental circumstances (1992). These mentors attempted to

draw on and relate to the youths experiences. Those less successful relationships

however, involved mentors who "were more likely not to accept the youth for who they

were and where they come from" (Styles & Morrow, 1992). Similarly in her study of the

significance of mentoring in the lives of at-risk adolescent girls, Amy Sullivan found that

"important and health sustaining" relationships incorporate mentors ability to "understand

and validate the knowledge, experiences, and feelings of adolescents (1996).

This relational model of mentoring recognizes and celebrates the diversity among youth

(1996).

As Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington point out mentoring cannot be viewed in a vacuum separate from the youth's experiences, environments, and culture (1988). "Mentoring is only effective insofar as it accommodates, transforms,...or expands the influence of family, school, community..." (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988). Just as mentors must understand their limitations based on these circumstances, they must also recognize the gains that can be made by drawing on these circumstances. Mentors can only truly begin to help youth when they begin to relate to them. By drawing on aspects of the youths' community and culture volunteers can begin to make that relation. at-risk youth cannot be expected to accept "pro-social behaviors" until they are reminded that those behaviors exist right in their own communities and culture. Mentors must not negate or criticize who the children are and where they come from but incorporate those things into their relationships with the youth and use that knowledge as tools of encouragement and motivation.

Another way to help improve volunteer perceptions of at-risk youth is through more mentor orientation and training. As previously discussed, the success of any mentoring program is heavily dependent on whether or not its structure offers the proper training, screening, orientation, and support for its volunteers (Rhodes, 2002; Herrera, et., al., 2000; Sipe, 1998). In much of the literature discussed, very few addressed, for example, mentor training as being a major part of the mentoring programs' structure. However, many researchers claim that mentor training is one of the most important components in planned mentoring programs (Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 1998; Herrera, et.,al., 2000). According to Rhodes, many of the misconceptions about at-risk youth and the role

of the mentor could be addressed through more mentor orientation (2002). For example in the school/community mentoring program at Windmere Boulevard School in Amherst, NY, mandatory orientation for parents, mentors, and mentees were held to insure that all individuals involved understood their role as well as the purpose and aims of the program (Terry, 1999). Similarly, Lee and Cramond found in their study of a successful mentoring program that training was on-going (1999). In fact, training sessions for mentors were held monthly through out the school year to trouble shoot and address any problems, questions, or concerns that the volunteers may have had in relation to their role as mentor (Lee & Cramond, 1999).

Rhodes states that many volunteers become involved with mentoring programs without a complete understanding of the role that they must play or the challenges that they will possibly face (2002). They expect dramatic overnight changes in their mentees or anticipate that they will see immediate positive results in their mentees' behaviors or attitudes without realizing that before such changes can occur a trusting bond must first be established. When changes do not occur as expected, many volunteers begin to believe that they are not effective as mentors and become overwhelmed with guilt (Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2002). This can put a strain on the mentor/mentee relationship and cause it to self-destruct. Rhodes believes that through proper mentor training and support, volunteers can be made aware of the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship and how it develops (2002). They can become apprised of the unspoken truths of mentoring: that positive changes are the result of trust, mutual interest and a close bond and that a strong mentor/mentee relationship takes a great deal of time, effort, dedication,

and persistence. Learning about these unspoken truths through well structured orientation and training could help eliminate some of the misconceptions and alleviate some of the disappoint and frustration that mentors often experience (Rhodes, 2002).

It is believed that if volunteers better understand their roles as mentors and how the mentor/mentee relationship works then they will be better prepared and serve as better mentors (Rhodes, 2002). However, many programs don't focus on volunteer training. Even with well established programs like BBBS, if financial and human resources become an issue, intensive volunteer training can be neglected (Rhodes, 2002). Also, many programs become so concerned about the long waiting list that it becomes more of a focus to make matches than to establish strong, enduring relationships. Additionally, it is a major concern of program organizers not to put excessive time constraints on volunteers (Rhodes, 2002).

Along with screening, support and supervision, mentor orientation and training are seen as key components to a successful planned mentoring program (Sipe, 1998; Rhodes, 2002). Rhodes points out that one of the reasons why it is so crucial is because it can go along way in helping to correct some of the misconceptions that volunteers may have about their role as mentor, the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship and the youth that they will be working with (2002). She insists that if caring enduring mentor/mentee relationships are to be established and successfully sustained then proper volunteer training must be a part of the overall structure of the mentoring program (2002).

Cross-Race Matches and Minority Recruitment

Further exploration should also be conducted to gain better understanding of the

effects of cross-race matches (minority youth matched with a non-minority volunteer) on

African-American and other minority youth. The existing literature supports that there

are no differences in gained benefits between minority youth in same-race matches and

minority youth in cross-race matches. In a study conducted by Jean E. Rhodes and

several of her colleagues, it was found that when students in same-race matches were

compared to students in cross-race matches, there were no significant differences.

However, when the youths were further separated by gender it was found that minority

boys in cross-race matches "experienced a slightly greater decline in perceived scholastic

competence and self-worth than minority boys in same-race matches" and minority girls

in cross-race matches had "greater declines in the value they place on school and self-

worth than minority girls in same-race matches" (Rhodes, et. al.). Despite these findings,

Rhodes and her colleagues question if these results were influenced more by gender than

by race (2002). She and her colleagues still contend that their is no proof that same-race

matches are any better or more impactful than cross-race matches (Rhodes, 2002).

Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington (1988), Freedman (1993), and Furano, et. al. (1993)

also claim that there are no reasons or findings that support the elimination of cross-race

matching in planned mentoring.

However, despite these claims, programs like BBBS still struggle to increase their

numbers of minority volunteers (Furano, et. al., 1993). This fact leaves several

unanswered questions. If these minority youth in cross-race matches benefit from the

programs just as much as minority youth in same-race matches, then why the urgent need

for more minority volunteers? And why is it that white youth are very seldom, if ever,

matched with minority mentors (Furano, et. al., 1993)? If there is no apparent difference

between the benefits in cross-race and same-race matches, why not pair some of the

available minority mentors with white youth? Are these white same race matches made

by request of the youth and the parent? Do minority youth and parents request same races

matches?

More than likely parents and youths do make requests that the mentors be the

same race as the child. This request is made probably more often than not as a way to

ensure that the child will feel comfortable with the adult. Honoring this request could

also reduce the number of inhibitions and barriers between the youth and the mentor. It is

possible also that youth in same-race matches benefit from the mentoring experience in

ways that programs are unaware of. However, these are only speculations. More

extensive research must be performed by programs like BBBS to answer these questions

and a gain clearer understanding of same-race and cross-race matches. As of yet the issue

has merely been glossed over in research, however, it would seem that exploring the

matter in greater detail would provide more understanding of the youth in these programs.

Achieving this kind of understanding could offer a great deal in helping programs like

BBBS and other more mainstream programs better serve their African-American and

other minority youth.

As previously stated, supporters of cross-race mentoring believe that there is no

significant difference between same-race and cross-race matches. They acknowledge the

possible effects that race and culture may have on the mentoring relationship (Rhodes,

2002), however, they are more concerned with the number of minority youth that remain

on the waiting lists of many planned mentoring programs (Furano, et. al., 1993). Because it becomes more important to give the youth on the waiting list the opportunity to be mentored by caring adults, issues of race and ethnicity often get ignored. Despite racial and cultural differences it is expected that a meaningful bond can form within a cross-race match provided that the mentor possesses sensitivity (Ferguson, 1990); (Furano, et. al., 1993).

This premise may hold true, however, it does nothing to address the very real questions of those who support same-race matches. For example, many of the major concerns surrounding cross-race mentoring have yet to be fully explored in the research. Those who favor same-race matches are very concerned about the effects that being in a cross-race match could have on minority youth. Proponents of same-race matches claim that volunteers from similar racial backgrounds are better equipped to understand the internal conflicts of minority youth brought on by society and are therefore better able to share a deeper level of trust, understanding and cooperation with their mentees (Ward, 2000). Additionally the proponents of same-race matches fear that the sense of guilt and defensiveness that white mentors may experience when faced with issues of racism and oppression may hinder their ability to address these issues properly with minority youth (Ward, 2000). Those who support same-race matches also worry that minority youth may feel uncomfortable being judged by white mentors according to racist stereotypes and that the fear of being misjudged will discourage these youths from taking the kinds of risks that could possibly boost their self-esteem and self-worth (Cohen, et. al, 1990). Lastly, opponents of cross-race matches feel that placing minority youth with white volunteers

can potentially undermine the youths sense of cultural pride and awareness and send a message that positive role models can not be found within their own race (Ogbu, 1990).

Presently, little research has been conducted to examine these concerns within cross-race matches. For example, in the study of cross-race matches conducted by Rhodes, Reddy, and Grossman, measures of cultural pride and awareness were not were not included (in press). Is it to be assumed that these issues are of little or no importance when it comes to mentoring? Within education it has been held that self-pride and cultural awareness are particularly important and must be nurtured if African-Americans and other minorities are expected to overcome oppression (Woodson, 1933; DuBois, 1935). During the Black Power Movement, it was believed that cultural pride and acceptance were essential to the African-American's quest to achieve social, political, and economic empowerment (Van Deburg, 1992). If cultural pride and awareness are considered essentials in the educational, political, social, and economic development of African-Americans and other minorities, then why would it not be considered a necessary part of planned mentoring which is designed specifically to assist adolescents in their social and educational development? If all children in planned mentoring are to be properly served then more research must be conducted to address these issues and others surrounding cross-race matches.

Additionally, in an effort to meet the urgent need for more minority adult volunteers, planned mentoring programs should also devise better methods of minority recruitment. As pointed out in the BBBS study, agencies were making conscious efforts to actively recruit minority volunteers, however, these efforts did not significantly

increase the numbers of minority mentors (Furano, et. al., 1993). It was also discovered in this study that those agencies that had at least moderate success in minority recruitment enlisted the help of their minority staff. This fact suggests that merely going to local black owned radio stations and churches isn't enough to increase the number of minority mentors. This shows that, in order for BBBS and other organizations like it to increase diversity among volunteers, diversity will have to first be increased among the paid staff and administration. This study proves that minority staff members, program organizers, and administrators can be instrumental in attracting more minority volunteers. Therefore, planned programs should consider that in order for diversity to really exist within their organizations, it must be pervasive. People of color must be seen not just among the clients and volunteers, but among the staff and administration as well.

Also, perhaps programs like BBBS and others that serve diverse populations of youth should examine and try to emulate the recruiting practices of those programs that are designed specifically for African-American youth. For example the studies conducted by Bush (1994) and Furguson (1990), which examined mentoring program for African-American youth, made no mention of minority recruitment being a problem. In both studies, the youth were overwhelmingly in successful same-race matches. True these programs served smaller populations of students, however, the size factor does not preclude larger programs like BBBS from studying and learning from their practices. It is possible that by examining the recruitment practices of mentoring programs like those studied by Bush and Ferguson, programs like BBBS can gain insights on how to increase their numbers of minority volunteers.

Incorporating Natural Mentors

Another area of development that deserves consideration is the possibility of using natural mentors in planned mentoring efforts. Much of the discussion on mentoring has questioned whether natural mentoring is more effective and more sustaining than planned mentoring. Studies have shown that natural mentors are quite successful in forming effective long-term relationships with at-risk youth. For example Rhodes and Davis found in their study of pregnant or parenting African-American and Latino girls that natural mentoring relationships were more successful than assigned mentoring relationships (1996). The study also proved that these natural mentors more often than not were from the same communities and shared similar backgrounds as these girls and were therefore better able to relate to their experiences, understand their circumstances, and offer them advice (Rhodes & Davis, 1996). Rhodes claims that it would be possibly more useful to encourage students to make use of the relationships that exist in their social network than try to establish new relationships with those who are not familiar with the youths or their communities (2002). Rhodes also claims that with these natural bonds, mentors are not as likely to disappear completely from the youth's life if the relationship does not flourish (2002).

Making use of this knowledge could definitely help planned mentoring programs in their efforts to serve minority youth. Planned mentoring programs should make an effort to go into the child's community and bring those natural mentors in as volunteers for their youth. Program organizers should ask the youth who, from their schools, their neighborhoods, or their churches would they like to get to know better. Staff members

should find out from the child or parent what neighbor, friend's mother, aunt, or church member does the child know but has not had the opportunity to form a relationship with. Program organizers should ask questions like "What adult besides your mother or father has always been nice to you?" or "What other adult besides your mom or dad can you trust?" Answers to these questions can provide programs with some ideas of who to recruit for the youth as possible mentors. Recruiters should also go into the child's communities, schools, and churches and ask "Do you know this child? What do you think of him? Wouldn't you like to be his mentor?" Such efforts might take a great deal of hard work, but the ultimate goal should not just be to make an easy or convenient match, but to help the youth and adult form a positive, long-term relationship.

Considering that natural mentors are usually from the same back ground as the youth (Rhodes & Davis, 1996), and that minority youth often choose natural mentors that are the same race (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington 1988), using natural mentors in planned mentoring programs could also help with issues of diversity. According to Rhodes and Davis, the key to natural mentoring is the fact that the mentors are people who already exist within the youths' social networks, people who share with youths a common background (1996). This should be a hint to planned mentoring programs to go into the youth's communities and make full use of the resources there, to actively pursue and aggressively recruit, as volunteers, adults who already exist within the youth's social network. William Julius Wilson claims "that many lower-income role models...still exist within the inner city however their status and influence are in sharp decline" (1987). Maybe placing these role models from the inner city within a planned mentoring program

can give them the opportunity to regain status and influence among the inner city youth. Using natural mentors as volunteers in planned mentoring does not guarantee a successful mentor/mentee relationship. It is highly probable that problems like commitment in time and effort will still persist. However, the use of volunteers that youth would *naturally* bond with - those that share similar cultural and economic backgrounds as the youth and that are from the same communities as the youth - can decrease some of the barriers and improve the likelihood that the youth and adult forming strong personal bonds. And this strong bond can increase an at-risk youth's chances of benefiting from mentoring efforts.

Improvement Through Empowerment

Lastly, surrounding all of the discussion of planned mentoring programs and the common goals that exist between individual programs and agencies, there seems to be one noble goal that shines through. The goal to in some small way improve a young persons life. Through their efforts to socialize youth, build self-esteem, increase academic achievement, and reconnect them to mainstream society, programs are striving to improve their youths' way of life. Among the list of methods or goals that mentoring programs have enlisted as tools of improvement, there is one goal that was consistently absent from the leading research. That goal or method is improvement through empowerment.

Among all of the major literature discussed, only Tierney and Branch made mention of their students experiencing any kind of empowerment through being in the program. The authors stated that the youths' "sense of control over their lives improved"(1992). Though it was not noted in the literature, some of the other programs

that were studied may have had youth to experience similar feelings. However, it remained constant throughout that empowerment was not an actual *goal* or *tool* of improvement for the mentoring movement or mentoring programs. Current discussions on the issue lead this author to conclude that improvement through empowerment should be included among the list of goals of mentoring programs as a way to better serve African-American and other minority youth. As Rhodes points out mentors are in a unique position to encourage and foster empowerment in at-risk youth (2002).

According to Robert Weissberg, the basic idea behind empowerment is a person's or group of people's ability to have influence and control over their lives. It provides understanding and offers choices, skills to make choices, and resources necessary to improve conditions and be uplifted. It encourages "abandoning passivity and embracing emancipation" (1999). Ideas of empowerment are particularly strong among minorities, women, and other oppressed groups. Weissberg claims that due to years of oppression and disenfranchisement "few groups appreciate empowerment more than African-Americans" (1999). Empowerment as a tool of improvement for minority at-risk youth could go a long way in helping them to make better choices and changing their outlooks on life.

Planned mentoring programs could help empower minority youth in two ways. One, they could provide for them a better understanding of the system of racial and economic oppression that hinders their lives, and two they could introduce the youth to the skills and choices necessary to begin overcoming their oppression. Because education is a tool that at-risk youth and other disadvantaged groups can use to help overcome

oppression, (Weissberg, 1999), mentoring programs, through their efforts to improve youth's academic achievement and attitudes toward school and decrease drop rates, have helped to partially empower youth. Programs can help to increase empowerment by encouraging youth to question their circumstances rather than accepting blame and becoming the victim. Through seminars, workshops, and the mentors themselves programs could work to further empower youth by providing them with an understanding of the system that they live in and the ability to critically analyze the system and its impact on their lives.

Research has shown that the educational, economic, and political structure of this country is designed to benefit some at the disadvantage of others. Racism, as well as classism, is a part of the very fabric of the nation (House, 1999). Education for example seems to target minority youth, particularly poor African-American youth, with discrimination. African-American youth are misplaced in special education, tracked in lower level courses, over-represented in behavioral disorder class, and disproportionately suspended and expelled (Hochshcild, 1985; Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997). Providing African-American youth with this information can help them to better understand the system and circumstances that place them at risk. Knowing that the system is designed to keep them in disadvantaged positions could help minority at-risk youth realize that they are not to blame for their circumstances. Having this knowledge could empower youth by motivating them to make choices that can help change the system and improve their circumstances.

As stated by one of the volunteers of the Chicago based Umoja Mentorship

Program, programs must work not just to improve self-esteem and academic achievement but to create leaders that can give back and empower the community (Mowatt, 2000). Other planned mentoring programs should follow the Umoja model and work through the youth to create empowered people and communities. Preparing at-risk minority youth with an understanding of the system that has dis-empowered them and then arming them with the knowledge and skills to make choices that can change the system will help them to regain their power. This tool of improvement could be the most important in helping all at-risk youth overcome poverty and better themselves both socially and academically.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

As it has been previously mentioned the purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of how the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) school based mentoring program entitled *School Buddies* impacts African-American youth. This study was highly qualitative in nature, however, some quantitative methods were used. A combination of interview, historiography, paticipatory observation and survey methods were used to complete this research. The following pages will address some of the methodological and theoretical specifics of the project such as background information on research subjects, techniques that were used to collect data, and the process by which the collected data was assessed.

Research Setting and Participants

Between the Champaign and Urbana School Districts there were a total of approximately thirty-five elementary school students involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) *School Buddies* program during the time which this study was conducted. Thirteen of the thirty-five students were chosen to participate in this study. These students who attended Prairie School, were observed weekly for six to eight weeks during the regular school hours. These observations took place on the school grounds during the weekly scheduled mentor/mentee appointments. Interviews were also scheduled with each student during that six week period. These interviews also took place during school hours.

The thirteen students chosen for this study all came from single parent families of low socioeconomic status. There were six females and seven males in the group and they ranged from seven years to ten years of age. The racial make up of the thirteen students was five whites, one biracial and seven African-Americans.

The adults involved in this research were those who served as mentors for the BBBS *School Buddies* program. All of the mentors involved with the program, except two who were agents for the BBBS local office, were students from the University of Illinois here in Urbana Champaign. Many of them belonged to the fraternity or sorority houses on campus and found out about the program when representatives from the BBBS Champaign office came to campus to recruit. The adults reasons' for becoming a mentor varied from person to person, however, when asked most of these mentors claimed that this was their way of helping and giving back. Overwhelmingly, the majority of the mentors, more than half, were white and female.

Methods of Data Collection

As previously mentioned most of the information used for this study was gathered through qualitative methods, however, there was some need for statistical data. The primary methods used to collect data for this project were (a) interviews with the eight elementary students and their mentees, (b) observations of the mentees with their mentors as well as the BBBS agents, and (c) a survey of all mentors involved in the *School Buddies* program. (d) A synthesis of the histories on mentoring was also incorporated in the data collection to help gain understanding of the original goals and purposes behind

organized mentoring and how those goals have influenced and been carried out in present day mentoring efforts, particularly the efforts of BBBS.

There was one interview conducted with the students during the six week observation period. This interview took place during the last two weeks of the observation period. The questions were primarily open-ended and addressed issues such as (a) the students' perceptions of the program, (b) their feelings about having a mentor, (c) what they like and dislike about their mentor, (d) things they have in common with their mentors, and (e) if they feel that having a mentor has helped them.

The mentor interviews also took place during the last two weeks of the six weeks observation period. These interview questions were also open-ended and attempted to address the mentors' (a) perceptions of mentoring and their role as mentor, (b) reasons for becoming a mentor, (c) perceptions of the program, (d) perceptions about their mentees and the mentees' families, (e) relationships with mentee, and (f) belief as to whether or not they feel that they have helped their mentors.

The weekly observations were designed to help the author better understand the interaction between the student and mentor. The purpose was to get a sense of how the students communicated with their adult mentors, the level of comfort between the mentor and mentee, how bonds were established, and how these bonds impacted the student. A journal of these observations were kept on each student. From time to time during these observations questions were asked of the students and/or mentors to explain or clarify certain attitudes and behaviors. However, the major purpose of these observations was to gain insight pertaining to the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship. In an effort to get

a more up-close and intimate understanding of this program and the details of the mentoring process, the author also took on a mentee through the program. This hands-on participatory approach helped to provide vital information that answered questions pertaining to how bonds are formed and maintained in mentor/mentee relationships, how adults perceive and implement their roles as mentors and what factors help create positive mentoring relationships.

The researcher, who also served as an intern for the local BBBS agency during this period, was given the opportunity to observe the directors and agents and gain a better understanding of how the organization works. The researcher also assisted with the running of the organization by helping to collect paper work from area schools, helping to increase minority recruitment and by making monthly contacts with and documenting the progress of mentor/mentee matches at Prairie School. Additionally, the researcher was also given the opportunity to see how the mentoring process works first hand when she volunteered to serve as a mentor in the program. This kind of participation in the program again allowed the researcher a first hand account of how the program functioned and the details involved in making and sustaining mentor/mentee matches.

The second major form of data collection was in the form of historiography. This method allowed the author to provide a detailed account of the history of mentoring programs such as BBBS and the mentoring movement as a whole. This historical synthesis included thoroughly examining the histories that have already been written by various authors about mentoring and analyzing the various insights that have been offered pertaining to its relevance in society and education. Additionally, this detailed account of

mentoring histories also included a discussion of particular areas in mentoring scholarship and literature that could benefit from further research.

Accordingly, history is an "account of an event and involves finding out how something occurred" (Titon, 1980). A reconstruction of the past itself by the weaving together of historical documents into "meaningful sets of explanations" is considered historiography (Gottschalk, et.al., 1945). Through the use of historiography method in this research, it allows the history of the mentoring movement to be retold. This is significant because it offers an understanding of the details that led to this movement and how these past events have effected the mentoring movement of today.

Additionally, a synthesis of historical data on mentoring helped to shape the argument of this research by offering definite details of how other scholars have approached the topic. According to Anthony Brundage, author of *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing*, historiography is essential to any research because it helps the author to explore his topic "along original lines" (1997). Keeping this fact in mind, it is understandable why the use of historiography was key in this research. A synthesis of the scholarship on mentoring helped to provide insights on what questions concerning mentoring have gone unanswered, what aspects of the topic have yet to be examined, and how exploring recent discoveries in mentoring such as the school based method can help fill in some of the gaps in the already existing body of literature.

The last method of data collection was in the form of a short questionnaire. These were distributed to all mentors involved in the Champaign County BBBS *School Buddies* program. The questions addressed the mentors' (a) background, (b) feelings about the

program, (c) feelings about their mentees, (d) feelings about mentee attitudes and behavior, (e) perceptions and preconceived ideas about their mentee, (f) perceptions about at-risk youth, (g) reasons for becoming a mentor, (h) understanding of the nature of their role, (i) level of impact on the student, and (j) suggestions for program improvement.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to cover questions that may not have been addressed during the interviews and to avoid some of the risks that come with interviews and observations such as selective perception and misinterpretation. Also these questionnaires offered a broader understanding of how the mentor views his protégé and himself in the mentor/mentee relationship.

Data Analysis

Because this study involved multiple research methodologies, it stands to reason that multiple data analysis techniques were also employed. The methods that were used to analyze the qualitative data collected from interviews and observations were heavily grounded in interpretive theory. Bennett and LeCompte claim that interpretive theory focuses on "the social construction of meaning in social interactions, elicited through descriptive methods heavily dependent upon direct observation...to describe happenings from the point of view of the participants" (1990). Interpretation also aims at uncovering how the subject understands his or her own existence (Babbie, 1998). Since interpretive theory seeks to describe or detail with social interactions and occurrences from the perspective and understanding of those directly involved, this study attempted to assess the data collected through interviews and observations based primarily on the

understanding and perceptions of the students and mentors involved in the *School Buddies* program. And because one of the most standard rules of analyzing qualitative data is making note of similarities and dissimilarities, an exploration of recurring themes, similarities, and differences in the attitudes and behaviors of the eight mentor/student pairs was also used to help analyze data.

According to Earl Babbie, because historical research is such a highly qualitative method, finding an exact method of analysis is a little difficult (1998). He states in *The Practice of Social Research*, that "there are no easily listed steps to follow in the analysis of historical data." He does however suggest that the key to analyzing historical data is corroboration.

Using historical/comparative analysis techniques allows the researcher to "master subtle details" in historical research by not only the retelling of past events but also by uncovering the similarities and common patterns that they share. For example employing this method of analysis to the historical data surrounding mentoring enabled this researcher to not only recount details like dates and places of various mentoring movements, but to also examine the common goals of these movements as well as discover similarities between the mentoring movements of the past and the movements of today. As Babbie states, when using historical/comparative analysis on historical data, it is a chief objective of the researcher to "find patterns among the voluminous details describing the subject matter of study" (1998).

The analysis of the quantitative data began first with the coding of survey items. The coding was executed in three ways by (a) creating numeric codes for every value,

particularly multiple choice and yes/no questions (b) inventing, when necessary, appropriate codes for open-ended questions and (c) creating codes for missing data. Once the coding was completed the data was entered in SPSS or the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In SPSS, variable and value labels were added. Once variable and value labels were created and all entries had been completed, the data was then analyzed in SPSS using cross tabulation and descriptive frequency tables.

Rationale for Qualitative Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the structure of BBBS school based mentoring program and try to determine if the program in its design is beneficial to the students, parents, volunteers and communities that the organization is attempting to serve. Also, as previously mentioned this study was mostly qualitative in nature and even though there were some quantitative methods used to gather data, in order to provide a clearer understanding of the BBBS *School Buddies* program, it was necessary to use more qualitative measures. The following pages will define qualitative research and explain why, for the goals of this project, certain qualitative techniques were chosen over others.

As defined by Earl Babbie, qualitative studies are "non numerical examinations and interpretations of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings" (1998). Denzin and Lincoln state that in contrast to quantitative methods which "emphasize the measurement and the analysis of casual relationships between variables" qualitative methods focus more on processes and meanings and seek to understand "how social experience is created and given meaning" (1994). Considering that the design and

focus of this study was to gain an understanding how the program is structured and how this structure effects things such as the mentoring process and how bonds form between mentors and mentees, it would seem that qualitative methods such as interviews and observations would provide the ideal means of gathering the data necessary to obtain this understanding.

For example, through the use of unstructured or non-standardized interviewing techniques, the author has the freedom to use this method as a mode of conversation where the interviewer and subjects can share information and ideas (Fontana and Frey, 2000). This kind of give and take correspondence can offer a better level of comfort for the subject and hopefully encourage a willingness to freely express themselves (Denzin, 1989; Fontana and Frey, 2000). Through the use of open-ended, non-scheduled, almost spontaneous questioning, the interviewer has the freedom to probe different unexplored areas and raise various ideas and concerns (Denzin, 1989).

For the purpose of this specific study, using interviews as a method of data collection provided information about the benefits of BBBS *School Buddies* program that statistical data could not reveal. As previously mentioned, the study sought to provide an understanding of the impact of the *School Buddies* program from the perspective of those directly involved. According to Fontana and Frey, interviewing is "one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings...from an individual or group perspective"; interviews focus on the "hows" and "whats" of individual lives and the situations that shape those lives (2000). Through

the use of interviews the author discovered the "hows" and "whats" of the mentoring

relationship and how it impacts the lives of students.

In addition to using interviews, the use of observations also helped to reveal

valuable information about the impact of the mentoring relationship on students. As

Denzin points out the purpose of observations is to "produce an understanding of the

group or culture being studied" (1989). This understanding is gained by recording the

ongoing experiences of those being observed (Denzin, 1989).

With the use of thick description and thick interpretation, it was possible to gain

insights about the interaction between mentor and mentee, and the nature of the

mentor/mentee relationship. Denzin claims that thick description and thick interpretation

are essential to observations because they "are central to the development of the

understandings that the researcher forms about the group being studied" (1989). Thick

description can help to "rescue meanings, actions, and feelings that are present in the

interaction experience" (Denzin, 1989). It "captures" the meanings people bring with

them to experiences. Thick description also attempts to record how interpretations unfold

during interaction (Denzin, 1989). Thick interpretation offers understanding by

uncovering the "conceptual structures that informs our subjects' acts" (Geertz, 1973).

With the use of these methods, it was possible to gain a more thorough

understanding of the essentials of the mentoring process, such as how bonds form

between mentors and students, how the bonds are maintained, how they impact students

and how these bonds are influenced by the structure and design of the program itself.

These qualitative techniques helped to uncover the more intricate details of the BBBS

School Buddies program that possibly would have been overlooked with quantitative methods. As Babbie states, survey researchers must be limited to the structure of questionnaires (1998). If an important, overlooked variable is discovered after data has been collected, the survey researchers are "out of luck." The field researcher on the other hand has more flexibility and "can modify research design according to observations or changes in what he or she is studying" (Babbie, 1998).

This is not to say that field research and other qualitative methods do not have weaknesses. Babbie claims that, as the researcher develops a theoretical understanding of what is being observed, there is a risk that the researcher will begin observing only those things that "support his/her theoretical framework" (1998). In an effort to avoid this, Babbie suggest using quantitative observations to "augment" qualitative ones (1998). For this reason the author of this study chose to use survey data to help limit the occurrence of selective perception, misinterpretation, and other risks associated with qualitative research.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVOLUTION OF MENTORING PROGRAMS

Friendly Visiting: The First Efforts

As previously mentioned, the concept of mentoring is one that dates back several

centuries. In chapter one of this study, it was discussed that the word or term mentor was

first seen in Homer's the *Odyssey* (Freedman, 1993). The relationship between King

Odysseus's son Telemachus and the older, wiser character Mentor was one of teaching,

guidance, and friendship (E.V. Rieu, trans., 1946). And as mentoring efforts have

evolved over time, the mentor/mentee relationship seen in the *Odyssey* has continued to

have a strong influence in defining the role of mentors (Freedman, 1993). The role of

Mentor in the *Odyssey*, *i.e.*, an older, wiser friend offering advice and guidance to a

young person as a necessity for his growth and maturity is the same principal that

spawned the first waves of the mentoring movement and continues to govern its efforts

today.

Accordingly mentoring as a social "movement" began and caught on in the late

eighties with the increased support of programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters

(Freedman, 1993). However the organization of mentoring programs and practices can be

traced back as far the late nineteenth century (Freedman, 1993). The "Friendly Visiting"

campaign is noted as being the first organized mentoring effort. At the end of the

nineteenth century with the large numbers of immigrants that were flooding the country,

there was a growing split between the classes of the rich and the poor laborers. Urban

civic leaders, in an effort to remedy the problems of the poor and begin lessening the gap

between the classes, launched charitable societies that used volunteer Friendly Visitors to

reach out to the urban poor (Freedman, 1993).

The goals of these organizations and their friendly volunteers were moral and

social reform. Their most immediate objective was to begin to correct the seemingly

rampant immorality that seemed to thrive and flourish among the poor (Freedman, 1993).

Their second, long-term objective was to reestablish and promote the small town

friendliness that had diminished over the years due to urbanization (Freedman, 1993).

According to historian Roy Lubove Friendly Visiting was to "substitute for the

spontaneous neighborliness of the small town" (1965). This neighborliness was expected

to alleviate the tensions between the classes by establishing sympathetic bonds between

the rich and the poor.

Another goal of the Friendly Visitors which can be seen in the mentoring

programs that followed was to be role models for poor children (Freedman, 1993).

Movement leader Mary Richmond believed that it was the duty of the Friendly Visitor to

look after the poor children and "give them a new and better outlook upon life"

(Richmond, 1969). The method of achieving this goal was through personal relationships

(Freedman, 1993). The visitors were to look upon members of the poor as members of

their own families and offer them "sympathy, tact, patience, cheer, and wise advice"

(Associated Charities of Boston, 1886).

Despite the enthusiasm and ardent fervor of the movement, friendly visitors found

that for several different reasons their goals to befriend and help the poor were seemingly

impossible to meet. For one, there was a shortage of volunteers who had the time and energy to devote to the cause (Freedman, 1993). Also, the visitors were often patronizing and perceived by the poor as outsiders. Volunteers discovered a population that felt more comfortable turning to friends and neighbors for advice and solace than "representatives of the middle class" (Freedman, 1993). Additionally, a series of economic depressions widened the gap between the classes and only reinforced the harsh realities of those living in poverty. Before long the well meaning volunteers were replaced by trained, paid professionals as the social work profession began to emerge. By the turn of the century the Friendly Visitors movement had ceased to exist (Freedman, 1993).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

As the Friendly Visiting movement came to an end by the turn of the century another movement based on the same spirit of middle class volunteerism began to flourish (Freedman, 1993). The Big Brothers Big Sisters of America movement as described by author George Beiswinger is much like a great body of water. It did not start up all at once as one body, but instead began as several smaller, independent agencies that came together to create one organization (1985).

The first stream to this great movement came by way of a Jewish businessman in Cincinnati, Ohio who is credited for coming up with the Big Brother idea (Beiswinger, 1985). According to Beiswinger, Irvin F. Westheimer, a member of a "close knit, charity-minded" Jewish community was at work one day and saw a young boy searching for food

in a garbage can (1985). Westheimer upon hearing the boys story was so moved that he decided to befriend the young man. He strongly encouraged other men in his community to do as he done and be-friend a poor young boy. The trend caught on and when one of the young boys referred to his older friend as his "big brother" the practice in Cincinnati finally had a name (Beiswinger, 1985). By 1910 the Big Brothers Agency of Cincinnati had been established. This organization only served poor boys from the Jewish populations and consequently Catholic and Protestant Big Brother agencies were later established in Cincinnati (Beiswinger, 1985).

Though Westheimer is credited for creating the concept and coining the phrase "Big Brother", volunteer efforts such as those attempted by his agency had begun several years before (Beiswinger, 1985). Judge Julius J. Mayer in 1902 had made efforts to secure male volunteers to work with the young boys that were coming before his New York court (Beiswinger, 1985) Ninety influential men in the city agreed to befriend and aid a young boy from Judge Mayer's court. Even though the term "Big Brother" was not applied to the efforts made by Judge Mayer and the other men, the philosophy of an adult helping a child through a one-to-one relationship was definitely present. This same philosophy continues to thrive within the organization today (Beiswinger, 1985).

In 1904 a movement began by Ernest K. Coulter created a tributary that would later become a huge part of the organizations mainstream (Beiswinger, 1985). Coulter who worked for the same court as Judge Mayer, and was possibly influenced by his efforts, was so disturbed by the sadness and suffering of the children he saw coming before the court, that he decided to address the Men's Club of the Central Presbyterian

Church of New York (Beiswinger, 1985). He relayed to his audience, which consisted of many professionals and community leaders, the story of a young boy who was about to be sentenced to a non-rehabilitating reformatory (Beiswinger, 1985). He claimed that the only way this boy's future could be spared was if some man would volunteer to "be his big brother, look after him, help him do the right thing, ...take a personal interest in him...care if he lives or dies" (Beiswinger, 1985). Coulter got the volunteer he wanted for this young man and the names of several other men who wanted to volunteer to help a young boy. Coulter's efforts started the Big Brothers movement in New York and helped to influence later Big Brother initiatives all over the country. Though Westheimer is credited for giving birth to the Big Brother idea, Coulter is recognized as the founder of the organized movement (Beiswinger, 1985).

As the movement began to grow and take shape more efforts were made to formally organize the group (Beiswinger, 1985). Over the years as more children were referred by the courts and more volunteers were recruited, it became a priority of the group to find more permanent quarters, become incorporated, and designate a larger administrative staff. In November of 1909, Big Brothers of New York applied for and later received a state charter from the New York Supreme Court (Beiswinger, 1985). As the New York movement continued to flourish smaller streams and tributaries of the body began popping up all over the nation in major cities. These organizations were separate entities and had no affiliation with the Big Brothers of New York (Beiswinger, 1985).

One of these important tributaries was the Big Sisters effort. Accordingly, this movement of women establishing one-to-one personal relationships with young girls

began as early as September of 1902 (Beiswinger, 1985). In New York catholic women from the Ladies of Charity had been helping the girls who were coming before the court. This group later changed their name to Catholic Big Sisters. In the years to follow Jewish Big Sisters and Protestant Big Sisters groups would be organized in other cities (Beiswinger, 1985).

All of these scattered agencies, founded on the same principals and beliefs of one-to-one mentoring, later became the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Federation, Inc. (Beiswinger, 1985). However, this organized federation, due to the strain of trying to adequately and effectively meet the needs of both groups, collapsed in 1937. The two groups became separate entities, later becoming Big Brothers of America (BBA) and Big Sisters International (BSI). However for several years there was no central governing body for the movement (Beiswinger, 1985). As Beiswinger points out there was no central body to "organize new agencies, formulate and maintain standards, sponsor seminars, and conferences, conduct studies, and publish educational material....scattered agencies were once again on their own"(1985).

Midway through the next decade the Big Brother agencies managed to organize all of its scattered agencies into one body. In 1946 eleven major Big Brother organizations became incorporated and created Big Brothers of America (Beiswinger, 1985). In 1970 the Big Sister organizations became incorporated and was named Big Sisters International. In 1974 under the leadership of new president Maurice Schwarz, Jr., BBA began efforts to merge the two organizations (Beiswinger, 1985). In 1976 both organizations voted to endorse the idea of merging BBA and BSI. In 1977 after a bill had

been passed to amend the charter name to include BSI the two organizations were legally

merged and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was formed (Beiswinger, 1985)

During the 1980's a new wave of interest in disadvantaged youth developed and

almost overnight mentoring became a national movement. Along with Big Brothers Big

Sisters of America, mentoring programs were springing all over urban areas to help

combat the misery and deprivation that was facing impoverished youth. A call to action

rang out nation wide to aid these youth and help them achieve a better life.

Birth of a Movement

According to Marc Freedman this wake up call came in the form of a column in

the *Washington Post*. On April 19, 1989 columnist Dorothy Gilliam challenged the

citizens of our nation's capital to "open their eyes, roll up their sleeves, and join in the

battle to win back the hearts of the inner-city youth" (Freedman, 1993). According to

Gilliam, youth in urban areas all over the country were being swept up into the vortex of

"drugs, gangs, and violence" (Freedman, 1993). Urban youth needed to be exposed to

positive role models who could guide them, encourage them and reconnect them with

mainstream adults. Through intervention urban, impoverished youth could have a chance

at a better life.

Apparently Gillian's distress signal about America's urban youth was taken to

heart. Her article inspired 55 individual responses. These individuals banned together

and called themselves the SOS Volunteers promising to at least once a month work with

the impoverished youth (Freedman, 1993). They joined forces with the already existing

Mentors, Inc. By that fall the SOS Volunteers had been paired in one on one mentoring relationships with students at McKinley High School in Washington D.C. During the course of the year, the call to action through mentoring became a growing cry in every urban center in the country (Freedman, 1993). Before long, major political figures began to take notice and get involved. Hillary Rodham Clinton and other members of the William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship suggested that "more mentoring programs be developed, evaluated, and refined especially those that involve young people..." (Grant Commission, 1988).

During this same time President George Bush in a commercial promoting mentoring began his Points of Light campaign (Freedman, 1993). Accordingly, this campaign was a part of the President's emphasis on volunteerism as a method of alleviating some of the nation's major social problems (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992). One of the major components of this campaign was the idea that mentors had historically been beneficial to youth and could continue to serve as examples and prominent "points of light" (Hamilton and Hamilton, 1992). With political heavy weights supporting and pushing the mentoring agenda, it was inevitable that financial juggernauts would soon become a part of the movement.

By the late eighties the New York based Commonwealth Fund had already been offering their support to mentoring efforts for several years. As early as 1983 the Commonwealth Fund was lending financial assistance to the mentoring cause (Freedman, 1993). Their efforts included paring disadvantaged youth with volunteers from the Coalition of 100 Black Women. This effort eventually evolved into a nationwide project

called Career Beginnings that presently operates in 24 cities all over the country

(Freedman, 1993). However, despite the efforts and financial support of the

Commonwealth Fund, it was not until after mentoring had caught on as a movement in

the late eighties that more influential organizations and corporations offered their support.

By 1990 Fortune 500 companies were involved in the movement (Freedman, 1993).

Companies like Chrysler, Proctor and Gamble, and IBM were teaming up with the United

Way and the National Urban League and the National Education Association to move the

mentoring agenda forward (Freedman, 1993).

The particulars of the mentoring agenda varied from program to program,

however, there was a fundamental element that served as the basis for the entire

movement. The movement, which according to Marc Freedman centered around

"middle-class volunteers, personal relationships, and a focus on poor children", sought,

through organized programs, to aid youth socially and academically (1993). Programs in

their varied approaches, designed plans that would best address the students' needs.

Some programs for example enlisted the help of mentors to work with students that are at

a high risk of dropping out (Freedman, 1993). Others use volunteers to increase self-

esteem and improve academic achievement (Bush, 1994), while still others offered

scholarship opportunities for Higher Education (Freedman, 1993) (Hamilton & Hamilton,

1992). Despite the varying approaches there remained a common denominator that

generated the programs involved with this movement - "an emphasis on recruiting middle

class adult volunteers to forge one-to-one connections with disadvantaged youth"

(Freedman, 1993).

Mentoring efforts were sustained by churches, civic groups, and organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters prior to the late nineteen eighties (Grossman & Garry, 1997). However with the advancement of the movement new programs and initiatives were burgeoning all over. As a result of the urgency of the movement programs like Project RAISE, Mentors, Inc., Milwaukee based One-on-One, Proctor and Gamble's Project ASPIRE, IBM's Project Mentor , Eugene Lang's I Have A Dream, and a host of others were created to address the needs of impoverished, disadvantaged youth (Freedman, 1993).

However, even with the creation of these new programs, many at-risk youth still have limited access to positive, caring adults (Freedman & Walker, 1996). As Mark Freedman and Gray Walker have claimed, when the number of children who are actually being served through mentoring programs like BBBS are compared to the number of youths who are still in need, the efforts of the mentoring movement seem quite insufficient (1996). Freedman and Walker claim that the only way to begin combating these insufficiencies is to call in reinforcements (1996). The authors claim that more efforts must be made by the public and political sectors to give necessary financial support to mentoring programs (Freedman and Walker, 1996). According to Freedman and Walker, blending contributions from the public, private and political sectors can provide financial and professional incentives for volunteers and therefore bring more caring adults in contact with the children who so desperately need them (1996).

In addition to agencies like BBBS, other organizations have played a key role in the mentoring movement. The 100 Black Men of America, Inc., for example, have been

mentoring African-American youth for the last thirty years (Dortch, 2000). The organization's *Miracles of Mentoring* program, serves more than one hundred and twenty thousand African-American males and females. Their program reaches students using one-to-one as well as advocacy mentoring techniques (Dortch, 2000). They also offer college scholarships as well as other academic and professional opportunities to the young people they work with (Dortch, 2000). The members of the 100 Black Men of America's approach to mentoring is based on the understanding that the real risk for poor and minority youth is the failure to dream, therefore, their program seeks to give disadvantaged youth the power and will to dream and help equip them with the tools necessary to achieve those dreams (Dortch, 2000).

New Initiatives and Motivations in BBBS

Since the beginning of the mentoring movement almost two decades ago, more efforts have been made to insure the future of mentoring programs and initiatives. According to Thomas Dortch, mentoring is being recognized as "the cutting-edge social investment strategy for the twenty-first century" (2000). Several efforts are being made on a national level to propel the mentoring movement forward and grant more and more disadvantaged youth access to positive, caring adults. During the Clinton administration, for example, hundreds of millions of dollars were allocated for federally funded mentoring initiatives (Dortch, 2000). Similarly the Kellog foundation recently provided millions of dollars to mentoring programs that specifically target African-American males (Dortch, 2000).

In the last decade, other innovations in mentoring have developed to compliment the traditional community based component. One such innovation is the concept of school based mentoring. In the early nineties organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters of America developed programs that would bring traditionally community based efforts in mentoring to the schooling environment.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency has come a long way from its humble beginnings in New York City. Currently BBBS is the largest and oldest mentoring agency in the country boasting more than five hundred chapters nationwide and over one hundred and fifty big/little matches. With such a strong hold in the mentoring movement, BBBS has over the last few years begun to turn its attention to putting more quality mentoring in the lives of more at-risk youth through its school-based mentoring efforts (BBBS, 2000). As previously mentioned school-based mentoring allows volunteers to work with youth in the school setting. Because the mentors and mentees are required to meet for only an hour per week on school grounds, school based mentoring eliminates some of the concerns associated with traditional community based efforts such as time constraints and safety (BBBS, 2000); (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000).

Since the push toward school-based mentoring in the mid nineties, BBBS has made more than thirty thousand school-based matches (BBBS, 2000). Studies that have been conducted on this recent mentoring initiative show that children who are paired with mentors within the school setting have better attitudes toward school, teachers, parents, and peers (BBBS, 2000). With so much success and potential for more, BBBS has begun to dedicate a great deal of its energy and financial resources to increasing the number of

school-based matches nationwide. Their goal is to make three hundred thousand school-based matches by the year 2004 (BBBS, 2000). This new concentration parallels with other efforts that the agency intends to make to insure that more at-risk youth have access to positive, caring adults. To insure this BBBS has begun forming alliances with other well established service organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Salvation Army, churches and already established African-American and Latino organizations (BBBS, 2002). Through this coalition building the agency hopes to recruit more volunteers and serve more at-risk youth more effectively.

Because of its enormous potential, school based mentoring has in the last decade sparked a great deal of interest among educators and communities alike. One study done by representatives of Public/Private Ventures evaluated two school-based mentoring programs in Green County, Oklahoma and Jacksonville, Florida and found the programs to be just as effective as community based programs. Advocates of the school based mentoring approach believe that these programs have countless benefits that can compliment community organized mentoring (Herrera 1999).

One of the potential benefits of the school based program lies in the fact that because it requires that mentors be available to their mentees for only one hour per week, it could attract volunteers who would because of time constraints normally not be able to participate in community based programs (Herrera, 1999; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). Secondly because referrals are made by teachers instead of parents, which is not the case in community based programs, school based programs can reach children whose parents "lack the time and energy" to get them involved in other mentoring alternatives

(Herrera 1999). Another potential benefit of school based mentoring is that it could prove to be more cost effective than community based programs. And lastly school based mentoring programs link the mentor directly to the school environment which could help foster improvement in academic achievement. (Herrera 1999; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000).

The design of the school based programs evaluated by Public/Private Ventures showed that students were referred by teachers who believed that they [students] could "benefit from additional attention and guidance" (Herrera 1999). Volunteers meet with students for one hour per week to discuss academics as well as engage in other activities such as sports or games. Volunteers commit to one school year of service and limit there meetings to school grounds or supervised school events (Herrera 1999). This study as well as others have shown that school-based initiatives have the same potential as community based efforts to have positive, long-term impacts on the lives of at-risk youth (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000)

The school-based mentoring approach has continued to evolve over the last decade. In fact schools all over the country are now beginning to use this approach to make mentoring more accessible to disadvantaged youth. For example, the Chicago based Umoja Mentorship Program has been the in the Chicago Public schools since 1990 (Volunteer, Umoja Mentorship Program, November, 2000). Additionally in May of 2000, the Mississippi Department of Education formed a partnership with the state's Attorney General's Office and Big Brothers Big Sisters to push their statewide school-based mentoring initiative. The goal of this effort is to make school based mentoring

accessible to every school in the state (Regional Director, BBBS of MS, personal communication, October, 2000).

In Champaign County, Illinois the BBBS school-based component called *School Buddies* has been in the Champaign and Urbana school districts since the spring semester of 2000. This program which serves seven elementary schools in the two districts has more than thirty students matched and several more on the waiting list. The school-based component was implemented in Champaign County for many of the same reasons it has been implemented all over the nation. The consensus of the program organizers and district managers is that more mentors are needed in the schools and that through the use of school-based mentoring, more children in need can be reached. The belief among BBBS charters nation wide is that school based mentoring can help by also providing mentors for those youth who may have been on the waiting list with the programs community based component (BBBS, 2000). The agency feels that school-based programs can "significantly reduce the number of ready-to-match children" by offering them a chance to interact with positive, caring adults who because of time constraints due to professional and family commitments wouldn't normally volunteer in traditional community based programs (BBBS, 2000).

Targeting At-Risk Youth

As mentoring programs and efforts have evolved over the last several decades, their primary focus has become to serve America's youth (Freedman, 1993). However this interest in the youth, particularly disadvantaged youth, has historically been a large

part of the mentoring effort. As previously mentioned, the initiatives set forth by "Friendly Visitors" during the end of the nineteenth century were to provide moral and social uplift to all those living in poverty. However, these volunteers particularly wanted to reach the children of the poor and serve as their role-models (Freedman, 1993) "We should not despair of the children, so long as we can attach them to us, and give them a new and better outlook upon life (Richmond, 1969). The same can be said for Big Brothers/Big Sisters at the turn of the century. The original goals of the program included offering young boys an adult male role model (Furano, et. al., 1993). These agencies also sought to reach out to and rescue poor, delinquent youth who were being shuffled back and forth in the judicial system. For over a century coming to the aid of disadvantaged youth has been at the heart of mentoring efforts.

The discussion surrounding mentoring today finds researchers still evoking terms like disadvantaged, high risk, and at-risk to describe the youth program organizers and volunteers are trying to serve. These terms have come to mean more than just poor, but have become synonymous with everything from drop-out to drug dealer. Jack Frymier and Bruce Gansneder use great detail to define the term at-risk and to describe some of the characteristics of at-risk youth (1989).

According to these authors a child is at risk if they are likely to fail on school or in life (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989). If a young person fails a course, is held back a grade, or drops out of school he or she is considered at-risk. Similarly, if a child has abused drugs or alcohol, has suffered physical or sexual abuse, or is suicidal that child is considered at-risk (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989). A young persons level of "at-riskness"

is also characterized by the bad or troubling thing that occur in his or her life, their frequency and level or severity, and the existence of other harmful things that may be going on in their surrounding environment. Part of being at-risk is also in a students abilities to cope with the factors that put them at-risk (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989). If student are able to cope adequately with the unpleasant and stressful issues that surround them, then potentially they can escape without long-term problems. However, some youth develop unacceptable, nonproductive methods of surviving these circumstances. If these coping mechanism or survival techniques endanger the child socially, academically, or emotionally, then that child can be placed at an even greater risk of failing (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989). Frymier and Gansneder are also careful to point out that being at-risk is not just an adolescent phenomenon. A child anywhere between six and seventeen years of age can potentially be at-risk (1989).

Frymier and Gansneder's definition of at-risk may provide some clarity concerning the term at-risk, however, it does not provide a clearer picture of the youth that mentoring programs seek to serve. Who is at-risk? What do at-risk youth look like? The following pages will attempt to show exactly who these young people are by offering a more exact picture of at-risk youth. Specific indicators of being at-risk as well as factors of race, class, and gender will be used to help identify the youth population that most mentoring programs attempt to serve.

It has been stated and reiterated several times that mentoring efforts have historically sought to aid disadvantaged or poor youth. These initial efforts however did not serve very diverse populations. For Example the first Big Brothers effort made by

Irving Westheimer served only Jewish boys. Most of the agencies served urban white or European immigrants (Beiswinger, 1985). According to Beiswinger, those few agencies that did serve African-American youth were completely segregated from the other agencies (1985).

Overtime the population of youth that Big Brothers Big Sisters, and other mentoring programs seek to serve has changed. The target group is still disadvantaged or at-risk youth, however, they now include children of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Accordingly BBBS agencies, as well as others, have watched their clients change from primarily being young boys in need of a role-model to young people from diverse backgrounds with "multiple needs and risk factors" (Furano, et. al., 1993).

According to Frymier and Gansneder (1989), Dryfoos (1990), Freedman (1993), and Bush (1994) there are several specific criteria and behaviors such as SES, academic performance, substance abuse, sexual activity, delinquency, and family structure that can put a child at-risk. Joy Dryfoos examines these indicators as well as other factors such as class, race, and gender, in her discussion of at-risk youth. For example Dryfoos (1990) , Furano, et. al.(1993), and Freedman (1993) point to poverty as an indicator of a youth being at-risk. Research shows that in 1986 twenty-one percent of young people in America between the ages of 10 and 14 were living in families in which the annual income was below the poverty level. In the same year seventeen percent of ten to seventeen years old were living in the same kinds of poor families. Accordingly in 1986, over five million youth between the ages of 10 and 17 were living in poverty (Dryfoos, 1990).

Adding race to the equation only offers a clearer picture of this nation's five million plus impoverished youth. Black youth are three times more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts (Assibey-Mensah, 1997). Studies show that 45 percent of black and 41 percent of Hispanic youth are living in poverty compared to only 13 percent of white youth (Dryfoos, 1990).

Another indicator for being at-risk is living in a single parent, female-headed family. As stated by Louv in *The Crisis of the Absent Fathers*, more than half of the children born in the U.S. during the 1990s will live in a female-headed household (1993). According to Dryfoos living in this kind of household increases the likelihood of poverty. "While eleven percent of all families live in poverty, forty-six percent of the female headed households that include children are in poverty" (1990). Mentoring programs such as BBBS often use this criteria to determine a child's program eligibility. As stated by Kathryn Furano, et. al, in *Big Brothers Big Sisters: A Study of Program Practices*, "Growing up in a single-parent household is the most common characteristic of matched and waiting list youth, since with few exception, an absent parent is an eligibility criterion" (1993).

When race is considered in this phenomenon, a better understanding of the youth being targeted and served by programs like BBBS is presented. According to Lee David Bush, minority families are losing their fathers at an "unprecedented rate" (1994). Among black youth there is an estimated fifty percent who live in a home without their fathers (Louv, 1993). This phenomenon particularly puts adolescent African-American

males at risk because it further limits their access to positive male role-models that are necessary for their growth and development (Shreffler, 1998).

Other at-risk behaviors in which African-American and other minority youth are over-represented are juvenile delinquency, early sexual activity, pregnancy, and school failure. For example arrest rates among adolescents is much higher for black males. Black youth are far more likely to be arrested, detained, convicted, and labeled as chronic offenders (Dryfoos, 1990). As Dryfoos points out "while black youth only make up 15% of the juvenile population, 23% pf juveniles arrested in 1986 were black" (1990). Also early involvement in sexual intercourse is more prevalent among black youth than other racial groups. Over four out of ten black males have engaged in sex before age fifteen (Dryfoos, 1990). By age 17 most black males and two-thirds of white and Hispanic males have engaged in sexual intercourse. Three out of five black females by age seventeen have had sex compared to two out of five white and Hispanic females (Dryfoos, 1990).

In relation to academic failure, differences according to race are significant here as well. According to Dryfoos, Black and Hispanic students have a greater chance of being left back than their white counterparts (1990). No matter the age or gender minority students are twice as likely to be left behind tow or more grades. Standardized test scores in reading and math are significantly lover for black and Hispanic youth as well. These rates are particularly high for minority youth living in the inner city or attending segregated schools (Dryfoos, 1990). For example in a special study done by the New York State Department of Education it was discovered that three out of four black and

four out of five Latino students do not finish high school within the usual four year period (1988).

These facts in no way imply that all at-risk youth are minorities. As Dryfoos points out in her research, due to the fact that the white race is the majority in this country, naturally the numbers of white disadvantaged youth exceeds that number of minority disadvantaged youth. This information does, however, offer a clearer picture of at-risk youth. For whatever reasons African-Americans as well as other minority youth are over-represented in these behaviors and categories that place youth at-risk (Dryfoos, 1990). Therefore, it stands to reason that mentoring programs like BBBS and others that strive to reach at-risk youth serve a significant number of minority youth.

CHAPTER FIVE

REASEARCH FINDINGS

Mentoring at a Glance: Participatory Observation

In the previous chapter, the author has made an attempt to provide some understanding as to who planted the first seeds of mentoring and how these efforts began to take shape, bloom, and grow into the movement that it is today. Essential to understanding the BBBS *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County, is knowing the mentoring initiatives that preceded it. Hopefully, by offering a detailed history of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and the mentoring movement and describing the population of youth that BBBS and other mentoring programs attempt to serve, the author has provided a clearer lens by which to view the *School Buddies* program. In the following pages more intimate details will be offered that specifically pertain to this program concerning its structure, the students it serves, it volunteers, and how it functions as a whole. The results of these findings will hopefully lend a better understanding of how mentoring programs in general and the *School Buddies* program specifically should be structured in order to achieve the goal of placing positive caring adults in the lives of disadvantaged youths.

Within this study it has been necessary to use methods that would allow the researcher to understand first hand the basic structure of the Big Brothers Big Sisters school based program. For example, through participatory observation the researcher has been able to engage in the mentoring process with volunteers called "bigs" and students

called "littles" and observe the interaction between the pairs in an effort to begin to asses how the design and infrastructure of the program facilitates strong bonds within the mentor/mentee relationship. The observation site was Prairie Elementary School of Urbana, IL. Originally, this school had eight students involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters *School Buddies* program. During the course of the year, however, several students were added to the program. One of these additions involved the researcher who as assigned a "little" in mid February.

As a participant in the program, the researcher was able to experience first hand the processes and procedures of the program. After the initial application process, interview, and screening, which consisted of several background checks and references, the researcher was paired with an African-American female in the fifth grade. There was no training or orientation prior to making the match or even after the first meeting between the researcher and her "little". In fact there was no training or orientation involved at any point during the process.

Additionally, at no point during the mentoring process was the researcher allowed to interact with her little or her little's family outside of the school setting. Volunteers were told during the interview that there could be no contact with littles outside of school grounds and interaction with parents and families was discouraged. Phone calls and other sources of communication outside of the school setting were also discouraged. No real opportunity was afforded by the agency to allow the researcher a chance to meet and dialogue with her little's parents. This practice was the same for the other mentors

involved in the program as well; no opportunities were given to allow mentors the chance to interact with parents.

After the match was made, the researcher was taken to the school by the program managers to be introduced to her "little" and the community outreach coordinator, who served as the liason between the school and the BBBS agency. During this visit, the researcher was instructed on proper procedure for Prairie School visitors. Volunteers with the BBBS *School Buddies* program were expected to sign in at the front office and wear a visitors sticker just like all other visitors of the school. Additionally, a time logue for mentors to sign was placed in the family center which is a room designated for the parents, family members, friends, and other visitors of the students in the school; most volunteers met with their mentees in this room. After the initial introductions, the researcher returned the following week to officially begin working with her mentee. During the observation period the researcher discovered that all of the mentors followed the same procedures every week of signing in and wearing visitors stickers in the school. All of the volunteers were also subjected to the same interview and screening process as the researcher, however, this was not confirmed until further data was collected through interviews and surveys.

The observation period lasted approximately eight weeks and took place during the spring semester. In the first week of the observations ten pairs were meeting at the school; during the course of the observation period three more pairs were added to the program. Because of time constraints and conflicts in schedules it was only possible for

the researcher to observe eleven of those thirteen pairs, however, only six of those pairs were seen on a consistent basis.

The researcher found that several of the pairs only met sporadically. Two male, Caucasian volunteers in particular who were paired with African-American males in the third grade stopped showing up mid semester. Another pair seldom got the opportunity to meet because the student was consistently leaving school early and would miss their scheduled appointments. The volunteer would attempt to reschedule some of the meetings and tried to meet earlier in the day, however, she still seldom got a chance to meet with her "little". Another volunteer had the habit of arriving hours before her scheduled meeting time. The researcher, however, was not apprised of this until the end of the program and therefore never received the chance to observe any of the interactions with this pair. The little that was assigned to the researcher transferred to another school in the area mid semester and even though the pair continued to meet every week, they were no longer a part of the subject group at Prairie. In light of all of these changes and irregularities, it is easy to understand why it was difficult for the author of this study to observe all of the students with their mentors, however, those pairs that met on a regular basis were observed every week of the observation period.

The six pairs that met on a regular basis consisted of four same race matches one, with a white male big and a white male little, another match with a white female big and a white male little and another two with black female bigs and black female littles. The other two pairs which were not same race matches consisted of a white male big and a biracial male little and a white female big and a black female little. The grades of the

littles ranged from the first to the fifth grade and the bigs were all undergraduates enrolled at the University of Illinois. None of the bigs in the six matches were originally from the Champaign-Urbana community.

Observations revealed that those pairs who met on a consistent basis seemingly had good rapports and were on their way to creating strong relationships. The students eagerly accepted the attention that their mentors offered and seemed proud to have a mentor. At the beginning of sessions each week some of the mentees' classmates would ask the children "Who is that?" "Is that your big brother?" Or they would see the volunteers coming in and say "There's your big sister." It was easy to assess from the mentees' broad smiles that they enjoyed this recognition and were pleased to have some one special coming to see them every week.

The activities that the students and volunteers participated in varied from pair to pair. Some matches had a weekly routine while others would "wing it" or "play it by ear." A couple of the mentors would divide their time between academic and social activities. Two matches in particular would spend half of the hour in class working on the day's lesson and spend the other half playing games. Other mentors would come and wait for the little to take the lead and make suggestion of how they should spend their time. One fourth grade girl would tell her mentor when she needed to do homework or wanted help with something. She would say "I have homework. I want to do that first and then we can go outside and play." The mentor seemingly had no problem letting her take the lead and decide what they would do with their time together.

One mentor always brought some type of arts and crafts activity for her and her first grade little. Together they painted vases and made beaded necklaces and bracelets. They even made their own tattoos from press on stickers. When this pair wasn't doing arts and crafts they were playing games like *Uno* and *Connect Four*. This particular mentor/mentee match seemingly worked well together despite the little's shyness, and even though they hardly ever talked, the student's smiles indicated that she at the very least appeared happy during the sessions.

Though this pair seemed to get along well, there were some interactions between the two that raised question about the little's level of comfort. For example it was noticed during the first week of observations that when their hour together was over the big asked the little if she could have a hug before she left. The little, of course, acquiesced, and after granting the big's request, she shyly approached the researcher and opened her arms. In the weeks that followed this little girl approached the researcher at the end of each mentoring session and requested a hug. The little girl, however, would only offer this affection to her mentor when she was asked to. These incidents do not indicate that this pair was not well suited or that they did not have a good relationship, however, they do raise some very pertinent questions. Why would this little girl be so willing to show affection to a stranger and less inclined to do so with her mentor who she'd been working with for several weeks? Did something happen during their initial weeks together that somehow discouraged the little girl from expressing public affection with her mentor? Did she some how see her mentor as someone that she couldn't be openly affectionate

with, or could it have been that the little girl just felt more comfortable expressing herself with the researcher because they share the same ethnic background?

Another observation made by the researcher that brought into question the comfort level between bigs and littles was the conversations within each pair. It was noticed that only two of the six pairs observed actually engaged in conversation during their sessions. The other four pairs played games and discussed schoolwork from time to time, but they mostly focused on whatever it was that they were doing. Occasionally questions such as "How was your day?" or "What's going on at home?" were raised by the bigs and likewise the littles would ask their mentors things like "Do you live with your mommy?" and "Do you like dogs?" and "Where do you go to school?" However, more often than not, these pairs concentrated on the task or activity at hand for the day, playing games or doing homework mostly in silence.

The other two pairs, which consisted of African-American female bigs and African-American female littles, seemingly talked more to each other and engaged in conversation that went beyond curiosities. It was observed that the littles within these pairs spoke openly with their bigs about problems in school and with peers. They confided in their bigs their personal fears and insecurities. In turn the bigs opened up to their mentees and tried to share with the students personal experiences and offer advice. For example one if these littles, an African-American fifth grader, shared with her big the problems that she faced in her classes with teachers and peers. She also confided that some times she'd get angry and lash out at teachers and friends. Her big listened carefully and asked her questions such as why she lashed out and why she had problems

getting along with teachers and peers. The big also asked her little how she thought she could better handle these difficult situations at school. Together these two sat down and composed a list of goals for the little. The list, which consisted of things like being more patient and respectful of others, being nicer to people, having a positive attitude, and knowing when to and when not to talk, was created to help the little get along better in school with her teachers and peers. While creating this list together, the student's mentor asked her about each goal and got the student to discuss why these adjustments were necessary.

Similarly, the other little, an African-American fourth grader, discussed with her big the insecurities she experienced due to her advanced height. She shared with her big that she felt out of place around her friends and classmates who were all shorter than she. This fourth grader's mentor expressed how she had similar concerns about her height growing up because she was among the shortest of her friends and classmates. She also confided to her little that she still experienced those insecurities on occasion because most of her friends were still taller than she. The mentor then pointed out to the fourth grader that being tall would one day be an advantage to her since she aspired to play basketball later in life.

These two pairs seemingly advanced beyond superficial questions and answers and began to achieve real interaction and thoughtful communication. Ironically, these two pairs that were able to engage in in-depth discussions were among the most recent matches made in the program. This observation is not to imply that the other four pairs observed could not effectively communicate with each other or that their relationships

were some how insincere. However it does again raise questions about the pairs' level of comfort and the bigs' abilities to relate to their littles. What factors enabled two of the pairs to engage in meaningful, thoughtful discussions while the other four seemed to stick to general conversations and steer clear of personal interactions?

During the observation period it was also discovered that most of the bigs were very conscious of time during sessions with their littles. For example, four of the bigs out of the six matches observed stayed within the minimum one hour per week requirement. These bigs would arrive at the school, log in, and leave exactly one hour after their arrival. Also when the hour was almost up, they were careful to remind their littles that they would have to leave soon. It was not uncommon for the littles of these matches to ask their bigs why they had to leave and if they could stay longer. However, despite the littles' requests, the bigs would leave in one hour as scheduled. These bigs would however attempt to console their mentees by promising to return the following week and play whatever games the kids wanted. In fact, at the end of the session, they would even ask their littles to pick out the games or activities they wanted to play the following week, which usually seemed to help reassure the students.

Only two of the bigs made a habit of spending more than the required hour with their littles. Further observations also revealed that the two bigs who elected to spend more than one hour per week with their littles were the same two who were able to engage in more meaningful discussions with their littles. Again this observation is not to suggest that the other bigs were any less dedicated than the other two. However, as it has been previously stated, these two volunteers were among the last to be paired with their

littles. In fact both of these matches were made during the last week of March and the program was due to end for the academic year during the first week of May. Perhaps their willingness to spend more than one hour per week with the students was due less to their level of commitment and more to an understanding that they only had a few weeks left in the semester to spend getting to know their littles.

The observations clearly revealed that the majority of the volunteers seemed to be committed to the program. Of those matches that were observed all met with their littles on a regular and consistent basis. There were a couple of incidents when the volunteers would arrive a little late, however, they still managed to spend one hour with their mentees. There was also an occasion where one volunteer who had been assigned a little in late March, misunderstood when she was due to start and as a result didn't show up one week. However, once the confusion was cleared up, she appeared regularly in the weeks that followed.

Over all, the volunteers at Prairie Elementary School seemed dedicated to the program and their mentor/mentee relationships. This was exhibited again by their level of consistency. Among those pairs that were not monitored during the observation period it was revealed through the weekly time logs that most of the bigs were consistently meeting with their littles. Some of them did occasionally hold their mentoring sessions at different times than originally scheduled, however, despite these changes they did meet the one hour per week requirement. Only three of the pairs did not meet on a consistent and regular basis. And of those three pairs only two of the bigs were consistently absent

from sessions. These two bigs, as previously mentioned, completely disappeared from the program without any notification some time during the middle of the semester.

The volunteers' commitment to the program and their mentees was further demonstrated during the *School Buddies* program closing party. The party, which signified the end of the program for the academic year, was scheduled for May second - reading day on the University of Illinois Calendar. This was the final session for the bigs and littles in the program and was designed to give the volunteers the opportunity to say good-bye to their littles. Invitations were mailed to the bigs, the littles, and the littles' parents a week in advance asking them to come and participate in the program's only group event for the academic year.

All of the littles were present at the party, which was held in the schools family center, except one, third grade male who was ill. His big, who was present, elected to come back later in the week to say good-bye. Of the twelve matches that remained at Prairie only seven of the mentors were in attendance. The two male bigs who had become consistently absent during the middle of the semester were not present, however, the two African-American third grade males that they'd been paired with were there with thank you cards for their missing bigs. The agency's program manager took the cards and promised to deliver them to the boys' mentors, and even though the little boys remained at the party, it was obvious that they were disappointed. They remained quiet and withdrawn during most of the party and had to be coerced to participate in any of the games. In fact, one of the little boys was so withdrawn that he had to be coerced by one of the program managers to be in the group photo.

Three of the bigs who had been among the six matches observed were also absent from the closing party. Two of these bigs had met with their littles earlier in the week and said their good-byes and the other absent big made arrangements to see her little the following week. Again, the littles of these pairs seemed disappointed that their bigs were absent, however, they still willingly participated in the activities. Overwhelmingly, the closing party was successful; those pairs that were present the chance to spend time together and say their final good-byes. All of the littles who were present had prepared good-bye and thank you cards and letters for their bigs. One African-American first grader who was among the six pairs that were observed brought her big sister a plant. In turn, her big sister brought the little girl and hand made pillow.

Garden Hill, Yankee Ridge, Thomas Paine, and Martin Luther King, which are the other schools that participated in the *School Buddies* program, also had their closing parties on May second. Again, the majority of the volunteers were present at each school. For most of the volunteers, the closing party was the last opportunity to work with their mentees for the academic year. However, a few of the bigs did elect to see their littles again after the closing party. For example of the six pairs observed, three of the pairs met the following week. One of the pairs, a third grade Caucasian male and a Caucasian female undergraduate, met again because the little was absent from the closing party. Another pair, which consisted of a fourth grade African-American female and an African-American female undergraduate, met because the big was absent from the party. The third pair, an African-American female undergraduate and a fifth grade African-American female, was able to meet at the party, however, they decided to see each other just once

more the following week. Among all of the schools combined only a few parents came to the closing party. Invitations were sent out to them a week in advance, however, because the parties were during the day, perhaps parents were unable to attend due to work obligations.

Interviews and Surveys

Program Overview

Through the use of interviews and surveys, the researcher was given the opportunity to interact more directly with the students, volunteers, and other adults involved in the BBBS *School Buddies* program and gain a clearer understanding of the mentoring initiative by asking specific question pertaining to the program. In fact many of the survey items and exchanges in the interviews were generated by the processes, practices, and interactions that were exposed during the weekly observations. Again, this level of interactions with the subjects afforded the author of this study an invaluable opportunity to gleam insights about this program that couldn't be gained solely through observations.

At first glance, the BBBS *School Buddies* program seems to be a quiet successful and beneficial mentoring initiative. For example, the survey data reveals that all of the mentors surveyed believed that they and their littles formed a bond during their time together.

Table 1
Bond Formed Between Bigs and Littles

Valid	Answer	*f*	*P*	Valid *P*	Cumulative *P*
Valid	Yes	24	100.0	100.0	100.0

Considering that the establishment of strong bonds is one of the most important factors of any mentor/mentee relationship (Rhodes, 2002), it would seems that these findings indicate some level of success. Similarly, the data collected from the surveys also showed that most bigs felt that their presence in the littles' lives had been a benefit to the students.

Table 2
Did Littles Benefit From Knowing Bigs

Valid	Answer	*f*	*P*	Valid *P*	Cumulative *P*
Valid	Yes	21	87.5	95.5	95.5
	No	1	4.2	4.5	100.0
	Total	22	91.7	100.0	
Missing	Missing	2	8.3		
Total		24	100.0		

The data also revealed that at least half of the volunteers felt that they'd taught their littles important life lessons and skills during their interactions.

Table 3
Did Bigs Teach Littles Any Important Life Skills

Valid	Answers	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Yes	13	54.2	68.4	68.4
	No	6	25.0	31.6	100.0
	Total	19	79.2	100.0	
Missing	Missing	5	20.8		
Total		24	100.0		

One respondent reported that she'd taught her little "the importance of working on school work and doing it well" while another pointed out that she "tried to instill values of honesty and self-confidence" in her little. Another volunteer stated that he tried very week to impress upon his little "the importance of education" and that "schooling is what was going to get him places" And another mentor who commented on how she had a particularly shy little claimed that she tried to teach her little "how to be more sociable."

For those volunteers that felt they hadn't been able to teach their littles any important life lessons, two explained that they didn't feel if they had enough time with their littles to teach them anything. Another respondent explained that her goal had been to just spend time with her little and that she "just wanted to be there for him." The other two respondents who answered no for this survey item didn't offer any further explanation as to why they hadn't taught their mentees any important life lessons or skills.

In light of the fact that part of the goal of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is to impact youth in a positive way, it would seem that these findings indicate some level of

success. The organization's national mission statement clearly claims that Big Brothers Big Sisters of America aims "to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth...and assist them in achieving their highest potential..." Certainly with more than half of the volunteers surveyed stating that they'd taught their littles valuable life skills and that the students had benefited from knowing their mentors, it would appear that the goals of the organization were being successfully accomplished.

In addtition to survey findings, data collected from interviews also suggest that the program has gained some success. When the students at Prarie Elementary were asked to discuss their mentors and the things they would do together, most of the students offered nothing but positive responses. One fourth grader replied that she liked having a mentor "because I'm an only child and it's like nice to have somebody big around and stuff." The fourth grader also claimed that she enjoyed the time that she and her big spent together. "She's nice and she's fun and funny and she helps me with my homework a lot...She helps me with my homework or we go outside and play on the swings or we just sit down and talk...She let's me talk about what happened at school." This student seemed extremely pleased to have a mentor and took pride in their relationship. She claimed that all of her friends liked her big sister and that one of her friends even made a gift for her. The student could tell that all of her friends were jealous and wanted a big sister of their own because "they were mad at me, but it was nice mad." When this student was asked if she missed her big she replied that she missed her big a great deal. "Because she is fun and then I need help with my homework and stuff she would help me

all the time when she comes." The fourth grader was pleased, however, by the fact that she would get a chance to see her big again after summer was over.

A fifth grader made similar comments about her mentor. When asked what she liked most about her big the youngster claimed that she enjoyed just talking to her mentor. "We talked a lot and she would listen. Most of the other people don't listen or even my friends...she would listen and I would listen to her." When this fifth grader was asked if she would miss her mentor during the summer, she remarked, "yeah, I didn't want her to leave." The student wasn't aware that she would be able to meet with her big during the next school year, however, when she discovered that her big sister would follow her to Urbana Middle School in the fall she remarked that it was "really cool" for her to be able to do that. A first grader stated the he and his big "don't take we just play" but that he always had fun with his big and he liked having him around because "we do what we want to do." The student also claimed that he liked having his big brother help him with his school-work and that he'd missed his mentor since he left.

Similar comments concerning the *School Buddies* program and its volunteers were made by the other students as well as the adults involved with the program. One first grade teachers at Prarie Elementary raved about the program stating, "I thought it was very well run, very well organized. My impression was that somebody knew what they were doing and had it all together." The teacher also stated that the volunteers who worked with students from her class "were very committed. I lucked out; I had two great ones." This teacher commented on the changes that she saw in her students after they were matched with the mentors. One of the students, a biracial male had been

consistently absent from school but began coming everyday after he was paired with his big brother. The teacher stated that, "He would walk in every morning and look at me and say is it Monday and if it wasn't he'd say oh okay. It was like he really cared about school...He really tried hard not to get in trouble, not to be behind in his work...because he really wanted that time with his big brother."

Another student, according to this teacher was extremely shy and quiet and not very sociable with other students, and that having a big sister helped her to be more out going.

> She's just this itty bitty thing; she just gets run over and left behind and because of her size and her level of maturity and everything, really, I felt like she was socially probably at the bottom of the peak in the classroom. And by pairing her with a big sister who again is very consistent in being here...She just blossomed and I'll never forget that very last day when they had their little party and that girl came in that morning to see her big sister with a card and a flower all painted up for her and I just thought, oh, that's the first time she ever brought a present for somebody and planned outside of school to do something like that for somebody...And when her big sister appeared at the door she just lit up...she was just excited all the way through her whole little body. I mean it was just from the tip of her head to the bottoms of her toes. She was just full of the experience (Prairie School Teacher, personal communication, April 12, 2002).

This teacher again felt that the program was a huge success for her students and wished there were more volunteers available to work with other students in her class. She felt that programs like *School Buddies* were enormously needed for young people and could have definite and positive results in their lives.

> It's a wonderful program and I saw its benefit first hand, first hand. And so I would recommend it, the volunteers did a great job, if it just stayed the way it is I would be enormously thankful for its benefit for younger people. I think you know a single experience like this can change a child for good. It really can and sometimes we don't know what it does. We think we know but we have no idea

how it can touch a life of a child and I think this program definitely offers that opportunity...(Prairie School Teacher, personal communication, April 12, 2002).

Likewise, the community outreach worker at Prairie Elementary, who served as the program liaison, also felt good about the *School Buddies* program. "Oh I felt great about it...the students that came were excellent." The community outreach worker claimed that the program was a good idea and very beneficial to the students. "...the kids are so proud of it. I mean to have that special person to come and see them. And it does help their self-esteem." In fact, when asked if there were other students in the school who would benefit from the program, she remarked that there were several students in the school who could use a big brother or big sister and equally several parents were interested in their children being involved

> ...I had a parent call me frantically saying that her child wanted a big brother. And this was like just a couple of days before the end of the year...So yeah, I'm now having parents calling. Word is spreading, the children they see the other kids with their big brother and they want one, so they go home and they tell their mom about this...(Prairie School Community Outreach Worker, personal communication, April 16, 2002).

Despite the abundant praise for the program, there were a couple of areas of concern that was expressed by some of the adults involved in the program. The community outreach worker mentioned that there were some volunteers who didn't return to see their littles after spring break and that this had a very negative effect on the students. "They never came back...I was disappointed. It was very traumatic for the students." Additionally, she was also disturbed by the fact that several mentors did not show up for the closing party at Prairie on May second. "I was very disappointed in the

mentors that didn't show up for the last day...Some arranged to come the following week; that was good...But the kids looked so disappointed. That was terrible."

Similarly, a third grade teacher commented on the importance of mentors being consistent. The two third graders whose bigs disappeared mid semester were in her class and she stated that the students were visibly disappointed. "To think of those kids just waiting, anticipating...it's terrible...at least make a point of coming and talking to the child and explaining ...It's just hard for them, I think they get a sense of rejection on when the student doesn't show up eventually."

When the two third graders were interviewed and asked how they felt about their mentors being absent they both expressed their disappointment. One student claimed he felt "mad" because "When I was in the classroom looking out the door seeing if he would come and then silent reading came around I would be like, dang, he didn't come." The other young man stated that he felt angry and disappointed about his mentor's absence because "I needed help with my work and...he missed like a month." However, despite the students' level of disappointment, they both still praised their mentors and said they had enjoyed the time they spent together. One of the little boys stated he liked hid big because he bought him presents and they played basketball together. "He got me an Allen Iverson jersey and Iverson shorts." The other third grader stated his big also purchased him a Christmas gift and would bring candy to him and his friends. He enjoyed spending time with his big brother because "He always let's me pick what we want to play like if we want to play in the gym or outside." Even though there two little boys seemed still very loyal to their bigs, it cannot be ignored that the volunteers' absence

during the second semester could have had some negative impact on their mentees. Additionally, such behavior does raise questions concerning the volunteers level of commitment and their understanding of their role as mentor.

Bigs to Littles: How They Relate, Interact, and Form Bonds

Results from the surveys and interviews also offered a better picture of who the volunteers in the program actually were. Such information is valuable because it can give some insights on how and who the program recruits for mentors. It also begins to uncover how well the volunteers relate to their mentees. Again, research has stated that the most important elements of the mentoring process is the ability of the mentor and mentee to form a strong bond (Rhodes, 2002). The success of these bonds is not only strongly influenced by the amount of time that mentors and mentees spend together (Rhodes, 2002; Grossman, 1999) but also by the mentor's ability to relate to and understand the mentee's background and experiences (Rhodes, 1996; Davis, 1996). As Jean Rhodes points out it is not uncommon for youth to gravitate toward those caring and supportive adults within their own neighborhoods or communities such as pastors, neighbors, church members and extended family members (1996). Accordingly, these "natural mentors" are better able to understand the child's experiences because they are a part of the child's immediate environment and already established social network (Davis, 1996; Rhodes, 1996). This is not to suggest that planned mentoring relationships are not as effective as natural mentoring relationships or that volunteers who come from different backgrounds can't relate to their littles, however, because of certain familiarities between

the youth and adult, natural mentoring relationships tend to be stronger and more enduring (Rhodes, 1996).

After examining the results of this study it was found that most of the volunteers involved in the BBBS *School Buddies* program had very little in common with the students involved in the program. For example most of the volunteers in the program were not from Champaign-Urbana community. Almost all of them were students from the University of Illinois and in the area only attend school. The results of the survey also showed that most of the students involved in the program were African-American while most of the volunteers were Caucasian. Of those volunteers that were surveyed seventy-five percent were Caucasian, while only twenty-nine percent of the littles of those bigs that were surveyed were Caucasian. The other seventy-one percent were African-American or some other ethnic minority.

Table 4
Race of Big

Valid	Race/Ethnicity	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Caucasian	18	75.0	75.0	75.0
	African-American	4	16.7	16.7	91.7
	Latino	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 5
Race of Little

Valid	Race/ Ethnicity	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Caucasian	7	29.2	29.2	29.2
	African-American	15	62.5	62.5	91.7
	Latino	1	4.2	4.2	95.8
	Other	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

The results are similar when comparing the genders of the bigs and littles. More than half of the littles in the program were male. Of the bigs surveyed less than one fourth were male while fifty-four point two percent (54.2%) of the littles of those bigs surveyed were male.

Table 6
Gender of Big

Valid	Gender	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Male	5	20.8	20.8	20.8
	Female	19	79.2	79.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table 7
Gender of Little

Valid	Gender	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Male	13	54.2	54.2	54.2
	Female	11	45.8	45.8	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Aside from the comparisons of race and gender, the data collected also showed

other differences between the social backgrounds of the volunteers and students involved

in the *School Buddies* program. For example, most BBBS agencies target at-risk youth

(Freedman, 1993); (Furano, et. al., 1993). According to researcher there are several

social, educational, and economic factors such as low SES, growing up in single parent

homes, low performance on standardized test, drinking and drug use, juvenile

delinquency, teen pregnancy, illiteracy, and truancy can place a child at-risk (Dryfoos,

1990). For a child to pariciapte in most BBBS programs, they must possess at least one

of the at-risk factors (Furano, 1993). In an interview with the program manager of the

Champaign County BBBS agency, it was confirmed that the students involved in the

School Buddies Program were considered "at-risk."

> ...that is the terminology that we use, yeah, and at-risk could range from different
> avenues. Being in a single parent house hold and need that one on one attention
> or just living in a poor household prom multifamily households. Needing
> someone else to help out with math homework or something...they may need
> someone in their life to steer them in the right direction. They could be going
> down the right path but this extra person could help keep them going down the
> right path. If they don't have that extra person they could steer towards the bad
> directions. (BBBS Champaign County Program Manager, personal
> communication, April 22, 2002).

Similarly, interviews with other adults involved with the program further,

confirmed that most of the littes in the program could be considered at-risk. When the

community outreach worker at Prairie Elementary School, for example, was asked if the

students at Prairie who were in the *School Buddies* program could be called at-risk her

response was "Yeah. Definitely." She also claimed that the at-risk. Criteria they used

could consist of many factors "...And there was different criteria...some children didn't

have any male role models in their life. Some children their mom worked a lot and maybe they don't have a dad and their mom was always at work and we wanted them to have somebody..." The community outreach worker claimed, however, that most of the students came from low-SES, single parent families. Also one of the third grade teachers at Prairie stated that from her understanding that students who were being served by the program were at-risk for some things but not necessarily academic. Mostly the social aspect." She claimed that she referred students from her class to the program who "could use the extra benefit of having someone that they could interact with on a positive level that perhaps they didn't have this in their home if they only had one parent. And they just needed someone that could give then some guidance and some special attention."

When the students involved in the *School Buddies* program are compared to the volunteers who work with the program it is quite apparent that most of the mentorss social backgrounds are very different from their mentees. For example only one fourth of the bigs surveyed had never been reared in a single parent family.

Table 8
Were Bigs Ever Raised in a Single Parent Home

Valid	Answers	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Yes	5	20.8	20.8	20.8
	No	19	79.2	79.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Similarly most of the volunteers that were surveyed lived in homes where there parents were still legally married.

Table 9
Bigs' Parents' Marital Status

Valid	Status	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Married	20	83.3	83.3	83.3
	Divorced	4	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Also, when the volunteers' social class was examined it was revealed that about seventy

percent of those bigs were middle class or higher.

Table 10
Bigs' Social class/Economic Background

Valid	Social class	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Upper class	2	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Upper middle class	5	20.8	20.8	29.2
	Middle class	10	41.7	41.7	70.8
	Lower middle class	6	25.0	25.0	95.8
	Lower-working class	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Considering that the majority of the students involved in the program are either of low

SES, in single parent homes or possesses some other social factor that puts them at-risk

these confirm that most of the volunteers have social background that are very different

from their mentees and could potentially have difficulty relating to them. However, this

does not imply that these volunteers social backgrounds exclude them from being good

mentors. It does, however, raise concerns about the challenges these volunteers may face

in forming and sustaining a strong bond with these littles.

Aside from the demographic information there were other finidngs that also raised

questions concerning the volunteers ability to initially realate to and later begin to form

bonds with their mentees. For example the data collected showed that a large percentage

of the volunteers involved in the program had not had any previous mentoring experience

and similarly very few of the volunteers had had any experience in working at-risk

youth. Table eleven shows that less than half of the mentors survey had had previous

mentoring experience.

Table 11
Bigs' Previous Mentoring Experience

Valid	Answers	*f*	*P*	Valid *P*	Cumulative *P*
Valid	Yes	9	37.5	37.5	37.5
	No	15	62.5	62.5	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Similarly, table twelve demonstrates the limited number of volunteers surveyed who had

had expereince with youth labled at-risk

Table 12
Bigs' Previous Experience With At-Risk Youth

Valid	Experience	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	A great deal	6	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Some	4	16.7	16.7	41.7
	Very little	6	25.0	25.0	66.7
	None at all	8	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

However, despite the volunteers limited mentoring experience and limited experience with at-risk youth, most volunteers felt that it was easy to relate to their littles. In table thirteen it is seen that slightly more than seventy percent of the volunteers surveyed felt that it was easy to relate to their littles' experiences and background

Table 13
Was it Easy to Relate to Littles' Background

Valid	Answers	F	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Yes	17	70.8	70.8	70.8
	No	7	29.2	29.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Table fourteen however offers a somewhat interesting contrast. Even though seventy percent of the volunteers survey felt that it was easy to relate to their mentees, over forty percent felt that they could only "somewhat" relate to their littles.

Table 14
How Well Bigs Related to Littles

Valid	Relation	F	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Very well	14	58.3	58.3	58.3
	Somewhat	10	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Those volunteers who were surveyed also felt that they related well to their littles backgrounds. One volunteer felt that she and her little, despite the fact that she was unsure of her ability to understand her little's background, were able to get along very well. "As far as relating, I don't know how well I relate to her background, I'm not sure. But I think we get along pretty well; I think she feels comfortable with me; she's pretty honest most of the time so..." One volunteer, when asked to describe how well she related her little, stated that she wasn't sure if relating to her little's background was even an important factor. "...I mean we're different. But we've not really even talked about it. I don't think it matters"

Certainly being able to relate to the mentees' backgrounds and experiences would be influenced to some degree by the level of interaction that volunteers have with their mentees' families and communities. As previously stated some mentoring programs strongly encourage their volunteers to get to know their protégés parents and to participate in community and social activities with their mentees' families (Dortch, 2000; Terry, 2000). When those volunteers involved with the BBBS *School Buddies* program were asked if they wanted to have more interaction with their littles' families many agreed that such contact would have been very valuable. One big sister from Prairie

Elementary School said "I would like to meet her mom and dad. I would say it's been a disadvantage but there's always next semester." Another big from Prairie claimed that meeting her little's family could have better equipped her as a mentor. "Yeah that would have been better. Because meeting here is great but it's also in a school atmosphere and there is only so much you can do...I've been doing this for, I don't know, two months and I don't feel like I know her very well still or anything about her family or background...Yeah that would be better as far as being able to help her in any way."

Similarly, another mentor from Thomas Paine Elementary school believed that interacting with the mentees family was not only important to help foster trust with the child but to help foster trust with the parents as well.

> ...Yeah it could have fostered trust...yeah, I mean it's better. You've got to know the people who hang around your children, even good people; it doesn't matter. You have to know that. So I know as a parent, I don't think I would just want some adult that I don't know or talk to do anything with my child, personally. I mean it happens, right, but I'm just saying for a long amount of time without...I...I want to look you in the eye; I want to know. (*School Buddies* volunteer, personal communication, April 16, 2002).

This same volunteer felt that knowing his little's parents would have been a big help to him as a mentor and believed not knowing the boys parents was a disadvantage. "I could see it putting people at a disadvantage...I could definitely see it would have been more of an advantage to me to have met his parents cause there is insight a parent can give you." Likewise, the community outreach worker at Prairie also believed that interaction between bigs and their littles' families would have been quite beneficial. "Because I kind of think it would help the mentor as well as the parent, especially, the mentor if they could know the family and home situation and if they could do things with the children

outside of school. I just think it would benefit them so much more. And I think the families would welcome that mentor into their lives."

Despite the fact that some of the volunteers and other adults involved in the program would have liked to see the bigs interact more with their little's families and communities the likelihood of such interaction happening within the *School Buddies* program is quite small. The program director for BBBS of Champaign county admitted that more interaction could be positive but went against the guidelines that BBBS had set forth for the school based component. To help remedy this lack of interaction she suggested the mentors become involved with the community-based component of BBBS in addition to the school based. "yeah, uh, yeah. And that's where the communities program comes in and that's why I'm active in both of those areas. I do think it's beneficial to be in the community program too because you do see them open up." These findings imply that even though more interaction between families and mentors is beneficial and even desired, the guidelines and policies of the agency have to be followed. The way the program is presently structured precludes any interaction between the volunteers of the *School Buddies* program and the parents of the children involved in the program without both the volunteers and the children becoming a part of the community based component.

Program Organization and Design

In addition to the information about the volunteers ability to interact with and relate to their littles, the data collected also revealed other interesting insights pertaining

to the formal organization and design of the program. Volunteers were asked to consider the structure of the program and how well it seemed to facilitate them in their job as mentor. Of those bigs that were surveyed more than half ranked the organization of the program as being "good" or better.

Table 15
Quality of Program's Organization

Valid	Quality	F	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Excellent	6	25.0	26.1	26.1
	Good	14	58.3	60.9	87.0
	Average	3	12.5	13.0	100.0
	Total	23	95.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	1	4.2		
Total		24	100.0		

Similarly, those volunteers who were interviewed also had positive things to say about the organization of the program. One volunteer with Prairie Elementary stated that "I think it was well organized. It was like I called and they sent me an application two days later. I had contact through the telephone and e-mail and the program went smoothly." Another volunteer felt that the program was well structured, however, had some concerns about length of time it took for the agency to schedule her initial interview. "I'm thinking that the organization is really going pretty well...But as far as contacting, initially to get an interview, the people who do the interview, I guess there's only two of them so it was kind of hard to get the initial interview. But otherwise once that was started the organization was fine." Likewise, another volunteer with Prairie had

concerns about the rules that limited her having outside contact with her little. "I think that the way they do things is nice. The only problem I have is not having time with her outside of school...I understand there are ruled and that is good. But I know they do have programs where you can use some outside time outside of the school setting. But other than that, I understand the school setting is for the safety of the child."

Also a mentor with Thomas Paine Elementary School had concerns not about the organization within the agency itself but with the lack of structure and concern within the school when it came to interactions with the school contact person. "I thought it was a little disorganized actually. Because I'd been there for about...I believe five weeks before she and I actually sat down and talked about the aim of the program and what was expected of me. I thought it was just, I don't know..." This same volunteer, however, felt that the processes and procedures that were followed prior to the match, though very lengthy, were very well structured. "It seemed to be a lengthy process and I didn't mind that at all. Because I think if you're gonna work with students or young folks you need to go through someone's background...It put me at ease a little bit because I was thinking, okay they care."

Training was also another aspect of the program's design that was of major concern. As previously mentioned, researchers have found that training is one of the most important components of a successful mentoring program and that it is necessary to help sustain strong mentoring relationships (Rhodes, 2002; Herrera, Sipe & McClanahan, 2000; Grossman, 1999). The data collected showed that there was no training involved with the *School Buddies* program and that most volunteers felt that it was unnecessary.

Only four point two percent (4.2%) of the mentors surveyed had any training, which is

shown in table sixteen.

Table 16
Mentoring Training Available

Valid	Answer	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Yes	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	No	23	95.8	95.8	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Similarly table seventeen shows that only twenty point eight percent (20.8%) of the

mentors surveyed wanted more training.

Table 17
Bigs' Desire for More Training

Valid	Answer	f	P	Valid P	Cumulative P
Valid	Yes	5	20.8	20.8	20.8
	No	19	79.2	79.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

Ironically, though only a small number of volunteers in the program admitted to wanting,

when the same volunteers were asked what things could help to make them better

mentors, almost thirty percent indicated solutions or remedies that pertained to training or

training related issues.

Table 18

What Would Help Bigs Be Better Mentors

Valid	Responses	*f*	*P*	Valid *P*	Cumulative *P*
Valid	More Time	9	37.5	45.0	45.0
	More knowledge of littles background	2	8.3	10.0	55.0
	More training	7	29.2	35.0	90.0
	Doing things outside of school	2	8.3	10.0	100.0
	Total	20	83.3	100.0	
Missing	Nothing; unsure	4	16.7		
Total		24	100.0		

There were some volunteers and adults involved with the program that felt training would have been beneficial to the mentors and helped them better do their jobs. For example, one volunteer from Prairie stated that "Yeah! Training would definitely be helpful and even if it was like a few seminars or something. Cause I remember the initial meeting, she didn't know what she wanted to do and I'm never really sure what she wants to do or what would be fun for her. You know, beneficial in anyway. Some sort of organization as far as activities to do with the mentee would be helpful." The community outreach worker also thought that more training would be a great asset to the program because it could help determine the volunteers level of commitment. "Yeah, maybe that would be a good idea. I'll tell you what, if they did have that training I think you would

get the most committed people because nobody is going to go through all that and not be committed to the program if they are requited to do all that."

At first glance, these results seem to indicate that the *School Buddies* program has achieved considerable success in pairing some of the youth of Champaign County with positive caring adults. Especially when the local agency only instituted the school-based component a couple of years ago. However, despite this modicum of success, there were some strong indicators found in the results that suggest certain actions can be taken that can help improve the program for the students, volunteers, and other adults involved. Innovations that address the program's training and recruitment techniques as well as some of the program's guidelines must be implored if the school-based component is expected to flourish and reach its full potential in helping the Champaign-Urbana community. Therefore, the following chapter will offer a detailed discussion of how these results indicate the need for improvement in the infrastructure of the *School Buddies* program and offer suggestions on how to make the design of the program more conducive for successful mentoring and more beneficial for the students and community that it serves.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Volunteer Training and Orientation

As previously stated the Big Brothers Bigs Sisters *School Buddies* program in Champaign has seemingly gained some modicum of success in the two years that it has been in Champaign County. The program, which is in at least five elementary schools in both the Champaign and Urbana School districts, serves around thirty-five students. Most of these students, roughly sixty percent according to the program manager are African-American and considered at-risk. All of the volunteers except two are students from the University of Illinois. Agency records also indicate that only six of the volunteers involved in the program are African-American or some other minority. These volunteers are predominantly white, female and from areas outside of the Champaign-Urbana community. Based on the data collected overwhelmingly, the volunteers met with their mentees on a consistent basis of at least one hour per week. All meetings were held on school grounds because activities outside of the school setting were prohibited by the agency. Because of the limitations placed on the bigs pertaining to when, where, and how they spent time with their littles, there was no interaction between the volunteers and their mentees' families and communities. Despite this limitation, however, bigs and littles seemed to get along quite well and enjoy their time together. The students for the most part seemed comfortable with their mentors and appeared to be happy and contented during their sessions.

The data collected also showed that their was no mentor training or orientation involved prior to or after the matches were made. Volunteers were however taken through a thorough screening process before they were matched. Each volunteer had to have background checks with the local police and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). These background checks of course are used to insure that the volunteers are safe and do not pose a potential threat to the students in the program. In addition to the background checks with police and DCFS, each volunteers was requited to provide three character references.

On the surface this program appears to be well organized and logically structured in a way that would best benefit its volunteers and the students that it serves. However, a closer examination of the data collected raises some very important questions pertaining to the infrastructure and how well it facilitates the establishment and maintenance of strong bonds between mentors and mentees. Does the design and structure of the *School Buddies* program meet the challenges of the mentoring process? Should changes be made to the program infrastructure to better support the establishment of strong mentor/mentee bonds and if so what kind of changes are necessary? In the following pages, these questions will be explored by addressing those structural inconsistencies that may impact the mentors' ability to form enduring bonds with their mentees. In this chapter, structural issues such as volunteer orientation and training, volunteer, recruitment, and volunteer/parent-community interaction will be examined and discussed to assess how they influence mentor/mentee relationships and the achievement

of the organizations ultimate goal of making "a positive difference in the lives of children and youth..." through "...one-to-one relationships with a caring adult."

Throughout this study it has been mentioned that training and orientation are key components to any successful mentoring effort (Sipe, 1998; Herrera, Sipe & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). In fact without proper screening, orientation, training, and support of volunteers it is very difficult for agencies to successful maintain positive mentor/mentee relationships (Rhodes, 2002). However, despite the importance of training and orientation to the mentoring process, BBBS of Champaign county has elected to exclude these elements from the structure of its school based program.

The data has clearly shown that there was no training or orientation for the volunteers involved with the *School Buddies* program. Of those volunteers surveyed only one reported having any type of training. When this respondent explained the extent of her training she replied, "I had worked for BBBS and mentored before." As a volunteer who participated in the program, the researcher found that no orientation or training was offered at any time during the selection process. The researcher was interviewed prior to the match and asked a battery of personal questions, however, very little information was offered pertaining to her role as mentor. Also, there was very little information provided pertaining to the researcher's mentee besides, race, gender, and age. There were no suggestions made by anyone from the BBBS agency about how to begin the mentoring process, what could possibly be expected, how to engage the child, or how to deal with possible problems. The researcher, along with the rest of the volunteers received no orientation or training prior to or after the match was made. There were no seminars

workshops, or pamphlets. In essence, the volunteers of the *School Buddies* program were all thrown into the deep end of the pool and immediately expected to swim.

This process is very different from the one that the volunteers in the community-based program are subjected to. According to the program manager for BBBS of Champaign County, community based volunteers are not only asked for references and given background checks, but they are also given a much more in depth interview than the school based volunteers. Also, the agents from BBBS are required to do home visits of community-based volunteers before they are matched with their mentees.

Aside from the more rigorous screening process, the volunteers involved with the community-based program are also required to attend an orientation before meeting with their mentees for the first time. This orientation, according to the program manager, covers a wide spectrum of issues concerning the mentoring process. At this meeting, the BBBS agents are afforded the opportunity to address some basic rules pertaining to the community based program as well as address any questions that the volunteers may have themselves. In addition to the orientation, there are also quarterly meetings scheduled for the community based volunteers to help them throughout the various stages of their mentor/mentee relationship. According to the program manager, these quarterly meetings are not mandatory but they are strongly recommended for the bigs in the community based program because these sessions give these volunteers the chance to ask questions and address issues that may have come up within their mentor/mentee relationships. Aside from the orientation and quarterly meetings, the agency also requires a separate orientation for the parents of the children involved in the community-based program.

Again, the screening, orientation, and training process for the community-based volunteer is much more detailed than the process for the school-based volunteers. If more orientation and training had been involved in the process, it is possible that some issues encountered by volunteers could have been alleviated or at the very least avoided. This is not to imply that training can teach volunteers how to mentor. Indeed, that would be an almost impossible task because mentor/mentee relationships just like any other relationships that involve human beings function on a specialized basis. Mentoring relationships can not be placed in a vacuum and they can not be expected to all function identically. Because mentoring relationships involve individuals with individual personalities. They must function as a reflection of the needs, desire, and personal characteristics of the individuals involved in the relationship. Therefore, the purpose of training is not to provide a blueprint of the ideal mentor/mentee relationship nor is the purpose to teach volunteers how to be a mentor. Training can however offer guidance and instruct volunteers and how to maneuver the mentoring terrain and avoid any pitfalls that may be encountered during the mentoring process.

The data collected revealed that there were several areas within the school-based mentoring where more orientation and training could have been very beneficial. For example, as it was mentioned in chapter five, there were a couple of volunteers among the matches observed at Prairie Elementary School who stopped meeting with their littles during the middle of the spring semester. These volunteers never contacted anyone to explain their absence or terminate the mentor/mentee relationship. They essentially

disappeared without any word of explanation or good-bye for their mentees or the BBBS

agents. Proper orientation could have helped in this situation in a couple of ways.

For one, if the volunteers had gone through an extensive orientation process, they

could have been acquainted with the negative affects that lack of commitment could have

on a child. According to Marc Freedman many adult volunteers "are much better at

signing up than showing up" (1993). Having volunteers that are consistently absent can

have adverse effects on the students involved in mentor/mentee relationships. Research

states that when youths are abandoned in mentoring relationships, they are often left to

cope with feelings of doubt, confusion, and disappointment. In fact youths who have

unsuccessful mentoring experiences often internalize the situation and blame themselves

for the failed relationship (Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2002). This kind of experience can

make youth resistant to adult intervention and less likely to trust adults. Researchers

believe that being involved in failed mentor/mentee relationships where volunteers are

consistently absent or suddenly terminate the relationship can therefore be more harmful

to disadvantaged youth than never being involved in a mentoring relationship at all

(Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2002). Perhaps if those absent volunteers with Prairie

Elementary School had been made aware of the impact that their negligence could

possibly have on their mentees, they would have been more committed and less likely to

handle the situation so carelessly. It is possible if not highly probable that these

volunteers were not fully aware of the severity of their behavior or aware that their

commitment was not just to the BBBS agency but also to two young boys who were

depending on them to follow through. Perhaps, proper orientation could have helped to emphasize to these volunteers the importance of being dedicated and committed.

More orientation could also be used as an opportunity to give volunteers a more realistic understanding of the role, responsibilities, and challenges of the mentor. Freedman claims that the whole truth about mentoring is not always relayed to volunteers and as a result mentors, with unrealistic expectations often experience shock, disappointment and guilt when their mentor/mentee relationships don't develop as they imagined (1993). These volunteers become discouraged and terminate their relationships with mentees leaving both parties with a sense of failure and defeat (Freedman, 1993). It is possible that a more extensive orientation process could help reveal some of the harsh, unspoken realities concerning mentoring. Volunteers need to know that mentoring is not an easy task and that it requires dedication, persistence, and diligence (Freedman, 1993).

Additionally, volunteers must be informed that they will not be able to come in and save the youths that they are working with or change them over night (Freedman, 1993). Researchers claim that there are many reasons, such as difference in class, age, and ethnic background, that could limit the mentoring process (Freedman, 1993). Studies show that not all young people will respond immediately to planned mentoring (Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2002). In fact many researchers caution that volunteers must understand that just as all adults are not cut out to be mentors, all youths are not cut out be mentees (Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2002). Marc Freedman states that if volunteers expect to succeed as mentors, they have to be realistic about the youths that they are

working with and the goals they set for themselves, the youths, and the mentoring

relationship (1993).

These suggestions are not meant to imply that the two absent volunteers from

Prairie Elementary had unrealistic expectations concerning their littles or that they

suddenly became discouraged with the mentoring process or their mentor/mentee

relationships. None of the data collected offered conclusive evidence as to why these two

volunteers suddenly disappeared from the scene. However, the results of the data do

reveal that these young men along with the other volunteers in the *School Buddies*

program were not given any orientation or training before or after the matches were made.

Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that more extensive orientation at the onset could

have prevented these young men from lapsing in their mentoring responsibilities by

thoroughly informing them about the nature of their role as mentor, what was expected of

them, what to expect in the relationship, and how a negative or failed mentoring

relationships could affect their littles. At the very least extensive orientation could have

made these individuals more aware of the seriousness of their duty and instructed them on

the proper procedure for ending a mentor/mentee relationship.

According to Jeane Rhodes, when volunteers begin to realize that they have to

terminate the mentor/mentee relationship, it is their responsibility to give their mentees

"ample warning" (2002). She sates that "a few weeks' notice and an appropriately

detailed explanation can provide adolescents with a better understanding, reassurances,

and the opportunity to reach some sort of closure" (Rhodes, 2002). Proper termination

can eliminate the feelings of loss and rejection that youth experience from the

unexpected, abrupt termination of mentoring relationships. Case managers of programs

who offer extensive orientation and training can better prepare volunteers for such

occurrences by helping them to rehearse how to properly carry out a mentoring

relationship termination and how to handle possible hurt feelings from mentees (Rhodes,

2002). Again, orientation that addressed these issues would better prepare volunteers for

the duties and challenges of mentoring and make them more aware of the delicate nature

of the mentor/mentee relationship. As previously mentioned, the key to any successful

mentoring relationship is the establishment of strong bonds (Rhodes, 2002). Those bonds

are facilitated in part by proper training and orientation of volunteers (Sipe, 1999;

Hererra, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002).

Perhaps better orientation could have helped not only the absent volunteers in the

BBBS *School Buddies* program, but also those more consistent mentors in the program.

Seminars and workshops that addressed the finer points of mentoring and offered more

insight on what to expect in the mentor/mentee relationship could have helped all of the

volunteers involved with the program gain a better understanding of the mentoring

process. Perhaps if they would have understood just how traumatic it would be for a

child to have a mentor who was consistently absence or just suddenly disappeared

without any explanation, they would have taken their responsibilities a little more

seriously. Better orientation could have given volunteers insights on setting realistic

goals for their mentor/mentee relationship, handling difficult situations, and if necessary

terminating mentoring relationships. This is not to say that proper orientation would have

automatically eliminated the risks and difficulties involved with mentoring nor would

extensive orientation guaranteed successful mentoring experiences for the volunteers and protégés. However, extensive orientation could have helped to facilitate strong bonds between the mentors and mentees involved in the *School Buddies* program by offering volunteers some of the support and insights necessary for mentoring relationships.

In addition to orientation prior to the match, training during the match is necessary to help sustain strong mentoring bonds (Sipe, 1999; Hererra, Sipe & McClanahan; 2000; Rhodes, 2002). According to Jean Rhodes, many of the training manuals and processes that programs use for their volunteers tend not to focus on the components essential to sustaining strong mentoring relationships (2002). For example, these less rigorous strategies are quite ineffective in dealing with topics such as, how to communicate with mentees of different age groups and how to handle things like diversity which are key issues in training that have to be addressed if strong mentor/mentee relationships are expected to be maintained (Rhodes, 2002).

Instituting training procedures that cover such matters could definitely be beneficial for the *School Buddies* program in Champaign County. As previously mentioned in Chapter Five of this study, well over half of the students involved in this program are African-American while the majority of the volunteers are white (See Tables 4 and 5). This suggests that there were several matches in the program that involved mentors coming from a different background than their mentees. Similarly, almost seventy-one percent of the volunteers surveyed were of at least a middle class socioeconomic status (See Table 10) while most if the students in the program were of a lower social class. This indicates again that the volunteers involved in the program were

coming from social backgrounds different than those of their mentees. Also, when asked

if it was easy to relate to their littles, almost thirty percent of the volunteers surveyed said

"No" and when those volunteers who were surveyed asked how well they related to their

littles, more than forty percent said only "somewhat" (See Tables 13 and 14).

Perhaps training procedures that addressed those essential issues mentioned by

Jean Rhodes such as communication and diversity, could have helped the volunteers in

the *School Buddies* program enjoy greater success relating to and communicating with

their littles. It should not be assumed, however, that mentors who were from racial and

social backgrounds different from those of their mentees were automatically ineffective in

communicating with their littles nor should it be assumed that those bigs who found it

challenging to relate to or could only "somewhat" relate to their littles experienced these

difficulties because of their race or class. However, it should be noted that the volunteers

and mentors were coming from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds, therefore, training

procedures that addressed these differences and offered some insights as to how to deal

with these issues in mentoring relationships could have been very beneficial in helping

the volunteers to establish and maintain stronger bonds with their littles.

Just as pre-match training helps to establish the importance of the mentoring

commitment and spending time with mentees, post-match training works to reiterate the

importance of volunteer commitment (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 1999). Studies

have shown that volunteers receive support and post-match training from program tend to

spend more time with their mentees while those volunteers who are not exposed to

training during the mentoring process tend to feel less of an ability to be "there for youth"

(Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 1999) Accordingly, this ongoing training aids in the development of supportive relationships between mentors and their protégés (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 1999).

Rhodes points out that many of the features that promote strong mentor/mentee relationships such as careful screening, extensive pre-match orientation, and thorough post-match training that offers candid realities about mentoring "are often neglected in mentoring programs" (2002). For example, a training issue that is often glossed over by program staff is the termination of mentor/mentee relationships (Rhodes, 2002). According to Jean Rhodes, relationship termination is an "influential piece of the entire mentoring process" that should be given more attention when it comes to the pre and post-match training volunteers (2002). As previously mentioned such training techniques would have been very beneficial to the volunteers in the *School Buddies* program. The two mentors at Prairie Elementary who were consistently absent, could have especially benefited from more aggressive training techniques that stressed commitment and the way to handle relationship terminations. Accordingly, the way a mentoring relationship ends can strongly influence a protégé's perception of the entire mentoring experience (Rhodes, 2002). Terminations that are handled properly cannot only aid in preventing feelings of loss and abandonment, but they can also be used as learning and growing experiences for mentees (Rhodes, 2002). Perhaps, if those delinquent volunteers from Praire Elementary had been exposed to proper training they could have gained a better understanding of how their actions would affect their mentees. At the very least, if they were not able to maintain their commitment, proper training could have at least instructed

them on the importance of using proper procedure when terminating a mentoring relationship.

In addition to giving mentors insights on how to communicate with and relate to mentees and if need be terminate relationships, more training could have given bigs in the *School Buddies* program more ideas of how to spend time with their littles and made therefore possibly helped them feel more at ease in their mentoring roles. For example of those volunteers from Prairie Elementary who were interviewed, several mentioned that more training would have been beneficial in this aspect. One volunteer stated that she never knew exactly what to do with her little and more training could have given her ideas about how she and her little could best spend their time together. "As I'm doing this it's kind of learning a little bit. I'm not sure what she needs...or what direction I should take with her...Cause I remember the initial meeting, she didn't know what she wanted to do and I'm never really sure what she wants to do or what would be fun for her. You know beneficial in any way. Some sort of organization as far as activities to do with the mentee would be helpful." Perhaps more training would have helped to better prepare this volunteer and others by giving them suggestions of how to communicate with and entertain their littles.

Jean Rhodes offers that many mentoring programs fall short of providing their volunteers with proper pre and post match training (2002). Accordingly, many programs offer little if any training at all. In a study that examined seven hundred national mentoring programs, it was found that less than half offered their volunteers at least two hours of training and twenty-two percent of the seven hundred offered no training at all

(Sipe & Roder, 1999). Apparently this lack of training can cause significant harm to the mentoring process in that those volunteers who receive less than two hours of pre-match orientation and training, find the least amount of satisfaction in their mentor/mentee relationships (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). Training and support from program staff offers volunteers a little more security in their roles and in turn they spend more time with their mentees and increased mentor/mentee contact results in closer mentor/mentee bonds and stronger mentoring relationships.

Research has also shown that even those programs that institute post-match training tend not to express to volunteers the amount of commitment and patience that mentoring relationships require (Rhodes, 2002). Many programs have a very casual attitude toward follow-up training and contacts with their volunteers because they tend to underestimate the risk that issues such as lack of commitment and inconsistency can pose for youth. According to Jean Rhodes, program managers and staff have to be more assertive in their training programs so that volunteers have a better understanding of what the mentoring process entails and can be better prepared for their role as mentor (2002).

In the case of the *School Buddies* program it was discovered that even though well over half of the volunteers surveyed did not particularly want training, the same volunteers when asked what things would help make then better mentors, thirty-five percent cited that training would have helped to make them better mentors. Though this is not the majority, it is a significant enough percentage to suggest that some sort of pre and post-match training would probably be of use to the volunteers in the program. If for no other reason than because orientation and training have been categorized as essential

factors in the establishment and maintenance of strong mentoring bonds, the *School Buddies* staff should incorporate these features into their program. Indeed, if the goal of the program reflects that of the national mission which is to "...make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, primarily through a professionally supported One-To-One relationship with a caring adult...by providing committed volunteers" then it stands to reason that training would be essential in this. Training lends that professional support and helps to better prepare the volunteers. This support and preparation can positively influence the strength and longevity of the mentor/mentee bond, and as Jean Rhodes states it is the length and quality of the bond that works to impact a mentee's life in the long run (2002).

Improvements in Volunteer Recruitment

Just as orientation and training are key factors in helping to sustain mentoring relationships, proper volunteer recruitment is also a crucial component in maintaining strong mentor/mentee bonds. Jean Rhodes states that the careless approach that is often used when recruiting volunteers can hinder a program's ability to help create and maintain strong bonds between volunteers and their protégés (2002). She states that more accurate information about the mentoring process must be provided for potential volunteers in order to give them a realistic view of what the role entails (Rhodes, 2002). In addition to more realistic recruiting campaigns, the author also suggest that mentoring programs should be aware of certain factors that could be pre-determinants for early termination of mentoring relationships (Rhodes, 2002). Such characteristics include

factors like age and marital status of volunteers. For example volunteers between the ages of 18 to 25 have an extremely high termination rate (Rhodes, 2002). Older adults on the other hand, particularly retired adults over the age of 60, have more time to devote to mentoring relationships and are an untapped resource that more mentoring programs are starting to focus on (Sipe, 1998; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002; Taylor & Bressler, 2002).

In the case of the *School Buddies* program, it would seem that the program managers did not take into account some of these previously mentioned pre-determinants of early termination. Keep in mind that, according to the program manager, all except two of the volunteers who were involved in the *School Buddies* program were University of Illinois students, most being undergraduates. Many of these students were therefore probably between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five and as it has been previously stated, volunteers within this age range tend to have a high rate of early relationship termination in mentoring programs (Rhodes, 2002). According to Cynhtia Sipe, most colleges and universities are seen as excellent sources for volunteer recruitment, however, college students often have a difficult time balancing their classes and other activities with the demands of a mentoring relationship (1999). As a result of these challenges, many college students are unable to maintain mentor/mentee relationships (Sipe, 1999). These findings would suggest that perhaps the program managers of the *School Buddies* program should explore other recruiting options besides the University of Illinois.

In addition to concerns surrounding the age of the volunteers other considerations also indicate that alternative recruitment resources be found. Historically,

the relationship between the University of Illinois and the Champaign-Urbana community

has been one of intense mistrust. In an interview with the director of the African-

American cultural program, a University of Illinois administrator and native to the area, it

was found that the Champaign-Urbana community has always been skeptical and

mistrusting of the University. According this is due in part to the fact that the University

has often used the Champaign-Urbana community in different research and funding

initiatives, however, the community has never reaped any of the benefits from these

projects.

> I think the biggest problem between the University and the community,
> particularly the black community is probably the perception of distrust of persons
> from the University. For a long time now professors have done research in the
> community and gotten grants to do this research; they've logged so many hours
> through the department to do this research or project that they've gotten funding
> for. And some times they'll hire graduate students, sometimes they'll hire
> undergraduates to do this project. So the community itself is tired of that and
> weary of that kind of relationship...I think really what the problem is that the
> University does not see itself or the University administration does not see itself in
> a position of being of assistance. Rather it sees the community as a way to get the
> resources they need to get the programs that they want accomplished. (University
> of Illinois Administrator, personal communication, September 24, 2002).

Recently, efforts have been made to try and bridge the gap that exists between the

University and the Champaign-Urbana community. The director of the African-American

cultural program stated in the interview that the Urban Exchange Center was one of the

ways that the University of Illinois was trying to establish a dialogue with the

Champaign-Urbana community to improve their relationship. He stated that

> ...supposedly the Urban Exchange Center is to be the campuses institutional
> response to the problem and perception of mistrust. What the center is supposed
> to do is find out what the community needs and the residents, what their issues are
> and try to match campus resources, primarily those educational resources that the

community may not have access to. (University of Illinois Administrator, personal communication, September 24, 2002).

According to this administrator education has been a major issue for the Champaign-Urbana community. He notes that many youth, particularly from the African-American community, are unable to attend the University of Illinois because they have not received the kind of education that would prepare them for such an academically competitive institution. In an attempt to respond to this disparity and meet the needs of the Champaign-Urbana community, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has become a part of a state wide initiative to work with local state school districts to improve academic achievement for students from pre-school to college. The initiative called the University of Illinois P-16 Task Force involves faculty, administrators and staff from all three University of Illinois campuses working with local community leaders and school districts to find reasonable solutions to the problems that inhibit teaching and learning for school systems through out the state of Illinois (2000).

Despite initiatives like the Urban Exchange Center and the P-16 Task Force, there are still issues concerning the educational inequities that exist for students in Champaign-Urbana community. According to the director of the African-American Cultural program, the University could serve as a valuable resource to help eliminate these inequities however a continuous dialogue between the University administration and the community must exist if long-term positive improvements are expected to be made. He also states that this kind of dialogue can also help to bridge the gap between the

University and the Champaign-Urbana community and improve the relationship by eliminating perceptions of mistrust.

The relationship that exists between the University of Illinois and the Champaign-Urbana community is not by itself reason enough to suggest that the agents of the *School Buddies* program find other means to recruit their volunteers. Indeed, it could be argued that using University Students as mentors for community youth could help to improve the relationship between the University and the Champaign-Urbana community. However, even if the relationship between these two entities was more positive and trust was not an issue, a strong argument could still be made against relying so heavily on University of Illinois students as volunteers. Aside from the previously mentioned concerns about the high termination rate of college age students in mentor/mentee relationships, there are several other factors that suggest a need for different recruiting tactics. One of these factors is the manner in which mentor/mentee bonds are limited by the use of University students.

The findings from this study clearly showed that the *School Buddies* program is structured primarily around the University of Illinois calendar. Clearly, this is due to the fact that almost all of the volunteers in the program are university students and therefore the mentor/mentee matches and weekly meeting are made based on their availability. This fact would cause no need for pause if the University Calendar were more in line with the school districts calendar. However, because of difference in things such as holidays and the beginning and ending of semester, there is a need for concern.

As stated, there are a few dissimilarities between the University Calendar and the Champaign and Urbana school districts calendars. For example, the University of Illinois students receive a whole week off for Thanksgiving break while students in the Champaign-Urbana schools only receive two days off for the Thanksgiving break. Similarly, U of I students receive more than three weeks off for the Christmas Holidays while Champaign and Urbana students receive only two weeks. U of I students end the fall semester almost a week before Champaign and Urbana students and U of I students do not return for the spring semester until more than a week after the Champaign and Urbana districts have already resumed classes. Additionally, the University of Illinois students are usually finished with classes and exams for the spring semester by the second week in May. However, the Champaign and Urbana school districts do not usually finish for the year until the last week of May or the first week of June.

When the *School Buddies* program is taken into consideration, these differences show that there are several weeks during the academic year that bigs and littles aren't afforded the opportunity to meet. That time is increased when other factors such as registration and class scheduling are taken into account. Each semester college students have to adjust to a new routine. By the time these students have registered, gotten into their classes and made any necessary changes, they are several weeks into the semester. For *School Buddies* participants, this means that at the beginning of the semester most mentees are in school for several weeks before their mentors actually get the chance to see them. In other words those are several wasted weeks that bigs and littles could be

spending together. Over time these weeks could add up and have an effect on the strength of the bonds of the bigs and littles in the program.

In planned mentoring programs, a strong predictor of close relationships and strong bonds between mentors and mentees is the amount of time that they spend together (Sipe, 1999 ; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Dortch, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Reportedly, those mentor/mentee matches that spend more than ten hours per month together are among the one that have the closest relationships and the strongest bonds (Rhodes, 2002). Spending this kind of time together, however, is a challenge for school-based volunteers. Because of the design of most school-based programs, on average, mentors involved in mentoring efforts like the *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County spend only 6.25 hours per month with their mentees (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). This suggests that the time in which school-based volunteers have to spend with their mentees is extremely limited and therefore every opportunity that they have to strengthen mentor/mentee bonds is precious. How then could the agents of the *School Buddies* program further limit that time by structuring the school-based mentoring schedule around the University's time line?

One key example of this imposed limitation can be seen for instance with the closing party that was held in May. This closing party which was organized in conjunction with the BBBS office and the schools' community outreach workers, signified the official end of the *School Buddies* program for the academic year and allowed the bigs and littles to say their final farewells. As previously mentioned the party was held on May second which was reading day on the University of Illinois Calendar.

Reading day, which is exactly one day after classes end and one day before finals begin, allows University students a day of uninterrupted study in preparation for upcoming finals. Reading day was chosen as an ideal time for the closing party because students would not be in class and possibly have more time available; it was seen as an ideal time to end the program because once finals begin most student volunteers would not have time to come and meet with their mentors, and after finals most student volunteers would be heading home for the summer. This decision, however, was not necessarily ideal for the mentees in the program or their mentoring relationships. For one, several volunteers did not attend the closing party because they were busy studying. Also, by officially ending the program on May second mentor/mentee contact time was cut short for the littles in the program by several weeks because the academic year did not end for the school districts until June. As observed by the director of the African-American Cultural Program at the University of Illinois, the last few weeks of the school year are sometimes the hardest for adolescents and therefore some of the most critical moments when mentors are needed.

> My thing is if you're going to work with young people, you have to work with them on their time and in their arena...from my experience, especially on the middle school level, the time when those students need you the most, is after you've left right before school gets out, people go bonkers and that's really when you need some stability, somebody coming to you saying, don't get kicked out of school today, don't fight today...you've been working with them all through the year and then suddenly you're not there anymore. That's not good for them. (University of Illinois Administrator, personal communication, September 24, 2002).

It has already been mentioned that all of the volunteers with the *School Buddies* program except two were university students, therefore, it is understandable that the

program managers had to accommodate the volunteers according to their needs and busy academic schedules. However, these accommodations should not have been made if they meant jeopardizing the quality of the mentor/mentee relationship. As it has already been stated the strength of the mentoring relationship is strongly influenced by the time that matches spend together (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring relationships are strongest when mentors and mentees spend at least ten hours per month together (Rhodes, 2002), however, this time is severely limited for school-based volunteers because, on average they spend only about six hours per month with their protégés (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). Therefore, creating a program calendar that eliminates several weeks of mentoring time from the academic year in order to accommodate volunteers further limits the time that mentors and mentees have to spend together and therefore jeopardizes the quality of the bond.

If the quality of the mentor/mentee bond is jeopardized then the possibility that the relationship will have a positive impact on the child is also jeopardized (Rhodes, 2002). Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that in order for the agents of the *School Buddies* program to fully realize the national goal of BBBS, which is to "make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, primarily through professionally supported One-to-One relationship with a caring adult by providing committed volunteers" efforts must be made to ensure that every mentor/mentee pair has the opportunity to establish a strong, healthy bond. Creating this kind of relationship, however, does not happen overnight; it requires dedication, persistence, and time (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harringotn, 1988; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et.al., 1993; Sipe, 1999;

Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Dortch, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). In light of this,

agents of the *School Buddies* program must begin finding other sources of volunteer

recruitment besides university students and branch out more into the Champaign-Urbana

community to find volunteers who are not restricted by the University of Illinois

academic calendar.

There are numerous reasons, why the *School Buddies* program would benefit from

having more volunteers from the Champaign-Urbana community instead of the

University of Illinois. First, there are several ways in which having volunteers from the

community can contribute to the mentoring process. According to Jean Rhodes, mentors

can serve as allies and resources in the lives of their protégés by "helping them to

establish and make use of connections in the community such as little leagues,

neighborhood associations, religious programs, and parent teacher organizations" (2002).

Similarly, it is stated that mentors can also serve to help youth labeled at-risk "make

important connections with other caring, cooperating adults within their own community"

(Rhodes, 2002).

Undoubtedly, most mentors probably have the potential to benefit their protégés

by serving as advocates and resources and by linking them to other adult champions

within their community. However, when mentoring initiatives like the *School Buddies*

program are taken into consideration it is questionable whether or not these volunteers

can serve their protégés in such a capacity. It has already been stated in this study that an

overwhelming majority of the volunteers involved in the *School Buddies* program are

students at the University of Illinois and not from Champaign-Urbana. Most of these

volunteers are from the Chicago area or other towns outside the community and are only here for a limited amount of time. Because of these volunteers' affiliation with the University as students, their status as "members" of the community can best be described as transient. Upon the completion of their degrees, most will more than likely move on either back to their hometowns or other places to work or continue their educations. How then can volunteers who are not actually a part of the Champaign-Urbana community or have no plans of becoming long term members of the community serve as resources and links for their protégés?

It is true that these students are a part of the University community which exist within Champaign-Urbana, however, as one University of Illinois administrator pointed out, the University functions separately from the community itself. As a result of this relationship many students, on campus feel disconnected from the larger community, and even though efforts have been made to correct this relationship the issue of the University being a separate entity from the Champaign-Urbana community is still a problem. Taking these facts into account, how is it feasible to even imagine that these volunteers can establish links between their protégés and other support systems with the Champaign-Urbana community. Again, Jean Rhodes claims that volunteers can help youth establish connections within their communities through churches, civic organizations, and other neighborhood programs (2002). However, this assistance can't be offered if the volunteers are not familiar with the youths' communities. If the volunteers are not a part of the community originally or have not at some point interacted with the community on a consistent basis then it is doubtful that he or she would even be knowledgeable of the

different churches, programs, and organizations that are available. For example, in Champaign-Urbana there are several youth programs offered though community based initiatives such as the Don Moyer's Boys and Girls Club, the Fredrick Douglass Community Center, and Gamma Upsilon Psi Society. However, if the volunteers in the *School Buddies* program are not familiar with these initiatives, how can they suggest them to their mentees as viable resources? Similarly, Rhodes mentions that mentors can serve to help youth make connections with other caring adults within their own community (2002). Yet this notion seems quite incompatible for the kind of volunteers that are involved with the *School Buddies* program. Again, if the volunteers have a limited understanding of and connections the community then mentees are from them the chances that they would have access to other caring adults from that community are quite slim. Volunteers who have no knowledge of the adult members of their protégés communities would probably not be very effective in directly these youth to other positive adults who can serve as alternative sources of support.

Based on this understanding, it would therefore seem reasonable for the agents of the *School Buddies* program to reach out more to the Champaign-Urbana community for volunteers. People who are from the community, who have lived here for several years and who are actively involved in community organizations and religious programs would possibly have better access to community resources and more knowledge of these clubs, programs, and people which would be beneficial to youth. As members of the community they are more likely to have ready access to those alternative support systems that their mentees may need. Also, as stated by the director of the African-American

cultural program at the University of Illinois, community volunteers would also have certain "valuable insights" that volunteers who are not from the community may not possess. Additionally, recruiting volunteers from the community would put littles in the program in contact with role models from within their existing social network. These "natural-mentors" as they are referred to by researchers, are known for having strong, positive bonds with youth due in part to their knowledge of the community and the insights that they offer their protégés in that regard (Sullivan, 1996; Rhodes and Davis, 1996; Rhodes, 2002). In fact, it has been cited that some youth respond better to natural mentors and have closer relationships with them than they do with planned mentors who are not a part of their social network (Amy Sullivan, 1996; Rhodes and Davis, 1996). These facts again further support the need for the agents of the *School Buddies* program to reach out to the community for adult volunteers.

In addition to community volunteers' ability to offer better access to community resources, these volunteers can also bring other valuable assets to the mentoring process. Historically, the citizens of Champaign-Urbana have contributed a great deal to the growth and prosperity of the community. By the African-American citizens in particular there have been countless contributions made to the Champaign-Urbana community. One periodical entitled *Through the Years: African-American History in Champaign County*, chronicles the history of Champaign-Urbana and its growth and development as it pertains to the African-American community. The publication discusses in great detail the history behind many of the black owned businesses throughout the county and how the spirit of entrepernuership continues to grow and flourish throughout the community

today (Merrifield, 1995). Another article chronicles the history of the first black families

to live in Champaign-Urbana (Banks, 1996) while other articles discuss the creation of

area churches (Brown, 1996). The establishment of the Douglass Community Center

(Dixon & Nafziger, 1995), the beginnings of Gamma Upsilon Psi Society and its Annual

Cotillion (Hoskins, 1998), and the contributions of African-American educators in

Champaign County (1999). Other articles published in *Through the Years* discuss the

contributions that several African-American soldiers from Champaign County made to

World War II (Merrifield, 1998) and the efforts of certain citizens to move intergration

forward in Champaign-Urbana (Alexander & Winston 1995; 1996). These articles in

their description of the African-American legacy in Champaign County prove that the

black community has a strong, rich heritage full of local scholars, leaders, and civic

reformers. As one writer for *Through the Years* stated, the information presented in these

articles point to the many who have contributed to the community and describe a legacy

"...something the children of the community can point to with pride and realize the

dignity and resourcefulness that was a part of their heritage" (Merrifield, 1997).

Using community volunteers who possess knowledge of this history could be very

beneficial to the mentees involved in the *School Buddies* program. As previously

mentioned, over half of the students served through the BBBS *School Buddies* program

are African-American. Undoubtedly these students could benefit a great deal from a

close relationship with adults who can offer them a sense of heritage and identity. Many

researchers have pointed to the fact that an awareness of culture and heritage is key to the

development of African-Americans and other minority youth (Hale, 1982; Banks, 1989;

Ogbu, 1990). For example, Sonia Nieto states that for children of diverse cultural and lower economic backgrounds it is important that their culture and community be intergrated into their learning experiences (1996). In the classroom, Gloria Ladson-Billings subscribes culturally relevant teaching as a way to improve the educational attainment of African-American and other minority youth (1994). She claims that the use of students' culture "...empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skill, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

This same approach that is used in the academic setting can be used in the mentoring process. By using volunteers from within the community who have some knowledge and understanding of the heritage and history of Champaign-Urbana a kind of culturally relevant mentoring can be implemented. As stated by the director of the African-American cultural program at the University of Illinois, many of the adult members of the Champaign-Urbana community are an invaluable resource for the younger generations. "...they have the history that the young people need and young people don't know it. So yeah, there is a tremendous amount of value to finding a way to connect with the people who've been here for a while..." If the use of culture and community in teaching and curriculum benefits poor and minority youth in the academic setting then why can't the use of community history and culture through community volunteers benefit these same youth in the mentoring process.

Mentors from the Champaign-Urbana community undoubtedly would have a lot to offer their young people in the way of history, heritage, and identity, however, their

involvement in the program could also serve as a way to improve the academic

achievement of the youth. These same mentors from the Champaign-Urbana area who

could offer students in the program a better sense of their heritage, could also serve as a

way to bridge the gap between the school and the community. It is true that even though

schools are a function of communities they do not always function as *a part* of those

communities. Many minority and poor parents often experience a sense of alienation

when dealing with their children's schooling environments (Calabrese, 1990). The

bureaucratic structure of the educational system does not afford these parents the

opportunity to feel a part of the schools and their child's learning experiences; these

parents are viewed and treated by school administrators, faculty, and staff as unwanted

"clients rather than consumers of public education" (Calabrese, 1990). Additionally

schools also tend to function as separate entities that are far removed from the

communities that they serve (Nieto, 1996).

In that the *School Buddies* program brings mentors **into** the school setting to work

with students, it could serve as an excellent tool in re-connecting the school and the

community. By using volunteers form within the local communities of the students that

the program serves, the *School Buddies* mentoring initiative could help the community to

become more a part of the schools. Research has shown that for students of color and

low socioeconomic status, parent and community involvement are key to academic

performance (Nieto, 1996). Those schools who have frequent interaction and

involvement with the communities see higher performance in their students than those

schools who do not have consistent parent and community involvement (Henderson,

1989). Therefore, using volunteers from the community could not only benefit students in the program by offering them insights concerning their heritage, but these volunteers could also serve as another link between the school and community which could in turn help to increase student academic achievement.

Additionally, the use of more volunteers from the community could also increase the number of minority mentors. Though there is no research that proves same-race matches are more beneficial or that cross-race matches are harmful, there is still a great deal of concern surrounding the low number of minority volunteers in planned mentoring. Most researchers claim that there are no findings that can support the elimination of cross-race matches in planned mentoring initiatives (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et. al., 1993; Sipe, 1999; Rhodes, 2002). However, despite the comfort that program managers and directors feel in making cross-race matches, there is still a strong push to increase minority volunteers (Furano, et. al., 1993; Sipe, 1999).

There are many reasons behind the push to increase minority recruitment and the need to make more same-race matches. One reason is that many advocates of same-race matches feel that minority youth need minority volunteers to serve as a role models in their lives (Sipe, 1999). Similarly, supporters of same race matches believe that minority volunteers are better equipped to relate to the social and psychological conflicts that may plague many minority youth and that white mentors who are matched with minority youth may "undermine the youths' sense of cultural identity" (Ogbu, 1990); (Ward, 2000). However, despite these arguments, mentoring programs are still forced to pair minority

youth with white mentors due to the low number of minority volunteers. For example,

the BBBS *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County has many cross race

matches.

Table 19
Gender of Bigs and Littles Crosstabulation

Littles in program	Gender	Count	Male	Female	Total
Gender of little	Male	Count	5	8	13
		P within gender of Little	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%
		P within gender of Big	100.0%	42.1%	54.2%
	Female	Count		11	11
		P within gender of Little		100.0%	100.0%
		P within gender of Big		57.9%	45.8%
Total		Count	5	19	24
		P within gender of Little	20.8%	79.2%	100.0%
		P within gender of Big	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As shown here in Table 19, sixty percent of the African-American littles were

paired with Caucasian volunteers, six percent were paired with Latino volunteers and

another six percent were paired with a volunteers of some other nationality. Roughly

twenty-six percent of the African-American students were paired with African-American

volunteers while all Caucasian students, one hundered percent, were paired with

Caucasian volunteers. According to the program manager for BBBS of Champaign

County, there is a strong desire to increase the number of minority volunteers. Perhaps,

more recruiting from within the community can put BBBS agents in contact with more

minority volunteers. Again, there is no conclusive evidence supporting the elimination of cross-race matches, however, the need for more minority volunteers is still a major concern and the recruitment of these volunteers remains a goal that most mentoring initiatives like BBBS strive for (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et. al., 1993; Rhodes, 2002).

It is possible that more minority volunteers for the *School Buddies* program can help insure even stronger mentor/mentee bonds. As researchers have stated, mentor/mentee bonds tend to be stronger when a pair has shared interests and experiences (Sipe, 1999; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Also, many parents and youths also request that mentors be the same race (Sipe, 1999). This is not to suggest that same-race matches are better or more effective for minority youth in the mentoring process. However, there are valid arguments that support matching minority youth with adult, minority volunteers and the advocates of same race matches believe that these arguments should not be ignored (Ogbu, 1990; Ward, 2000). In the case of the BBBS *School Buddies* program, if program managers and agents are really sincere about increasing their number of minority volunteers, then they have to begin to branch out and recruit more from the communities of the children that they are seeking to serve.

Several reasons have been offered as to why more volunteers from the community would be beneficial for the *School Buddies* program. Now suggestions must be offered as to how to reach these volunteers. There are in fact numerous ways in which the agents of the *School Buddies* program could recruit more community volunteers. One such avenue is to seek out area churches and other religious organizations. According to researchers,

churches are excellent sources for recruiting mentors (McPartland and Nettles, 1991);

(Sipe, 1999); (Trulear, 2000); (Dortch, 2000); (Rhodes, 2002). In fact, many churches

and other religious affiliates in Urban settings create their own faith based mentoring

initiatives and use members of the congregation to serve as volunteers for at-risk inner

city youth (Trulear, 2000). In Champaign-Urbana there are at least twenty area churches

that the agents of the *School Buddies* program could make use of for volunteer

recruitment. These churches as well as other religious organizations in the Champaign-

Urbana area are filled with local community members that would be ideal to mentor

community youth.

In addition to the churches and other religious organization in Champaign-Urbana

there are other area organizations that could also serve as resources for volunteer

recruitment. Many mentoring program use civic organizations like the NAACP to recruit

community volunteers (Sipe, 1999). Again within the Champaign-Urbana area there are

several such organizations that could lend their assistance to the *School Buddies*

mentoring program. Organizations, like the NAACP, The Urban League, The United

Way, National Council of Negro Women, Masonic Lodges, Elks Lodges, The Rotary

Club, Chamber of Commerce, Gamma Upsilon Psi Society, the African-American

Historical Society, Douglass Annex Senior Citizens Center, and the graduate chapters of

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and Delta Sigma Theta

Sorority, Inc. possess a wealth of members who have lived, worked, and served in the

Champaign-Urbana community for decades. The members of these organizations as well

as countless others would indeed be able to make a substantial contribution to the BBBS

school based mentoring initiative and if used as mentors could have a positive impact on the students in the *School Buddies* program. The challenge however is for BBBS agents to go out and aggressively recruit these community members as volunteers for the program.

Aside from churches and civic organizations other avenues such as the business sector are also worth exploring for more community volunteer recruitment. According to research, most mentoring programs build coalitions with area businesses and corporations to gain financial as well as human resources for their initiatives (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989; Freedman, 1993; Sipe, 1999; Dortch, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Thomas Dortch states that building coalitions with local and national businesses and foundations is a major part of the *100 Black Men* mentoring initiatives (2000). Some businesses offer a certain amount of time per year to their employees for community service. Other organizations offer financial incentive to their employees as a method of encouraging community service (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989; Freedman, 1993; Sipe, 1999); (Rhodes, 2002).

This method of volunteer recruitment could again serve as an excellent source for bringing in more mentors from the Champaign-Urbana community to the *School Buddies* program. Agents from the program could make an effort to build coalitions with the numerous business and retailers in the area to try to bring in more adult volunteers. Businesses like the Kraft Plant and Plastic Pack as well as the countless retail stores in Champaign-Urbana could be invaluable resources for volunteer recruitment and may very well already use special incentives to encourage their employees to participate in

community service. However, more effort has to be made on the part of the BBBS agency here in Champaign County to make use of these local businesses as resources.

Just as the area businesses, churches, and civic organizations can be used as possible resources for recruiting more community volunteers, the University of Illinois can also be used as a resource for gaining access to more adult mentors. The same coalitions that can be built with retailers and factories could also be built with the University of Illinois administration. As previously mentioned efforts have been made through initiatives like the Urban Exchange Center and the University of Illinois P-16 Task Force to improve the relationship between the University and the Champaign-Urbana community as well as address some of the educational needs of the community. Building an alliance with the BBBS agency and offering incentives to university employees who volunteer with the program could be another way for the University to reach out to the Champaign-Urbana community and meet some of its needs.

Agents from the BBBS local office could use this reasoning to persuade University administrators to join in their mentoring efforts by helping to supply more community volunteers. Even though most administrators and even faculty members may find it difficult to offer an hour per week to mentor elementary and middle school students, there are other employees with the University who would possibly be able to sacrifice this time if they were given support from University Administration. Office staff, administrative assistants and employees with the office of Operations and Maintenance and Food Services could all be excellent resources for volunteer recruitment. Many of these university employees have lived and worked in the

Champaign-Urbana community for a large part of their lives and not only can offer certain insights to area youth but also have more stability than the college students that are recruited.

As previously mentioned the status of the volunteers already involved in the *School Buddies* program is quite transient because of their position as students. As these volunteers, who are not from the area, matriculate through the University, they experience several adjustments in classes, schedules, clubs and academic majors. These changes in addition to the other rigors of college life, cause their availability to fluxuate as they progress from year to year (Sipe, 1999). Having older, adult volunteers who have lived and worked in the community for a number of years would perhaps provide more consistent volunteers with more consistent hours of availability.

Similarly, recruitment efforts can reach out to include Parkland Community College. Just as the University of Illinois has a number of employees who have lived and worked in the community for quite some time, so has Parkland College. Similar coalitions that could be built with the University administration could be created with Parkland and its administration. Also, if the BBBS local office would still like to use student volunteers, there are numerous students from the Champaign-Urbana community who attend Parkland College. The director of the African-American Cultural Program at the U of I pointed out that, more students from the Champaign and Urbana High Schools attend Parkland College that the U of I. These students would also be an excellent method for incorporating more volunteers from the Champaign-Urbana community into the *School Buddies* program.

Increasing Community and Parental Involvement and Interaction

It should not be assumed that just because these different, more aggressive recruiting efforts are implemented, that more adult volunteers from the community will be gained. True more aggressive techniques in mentor recruitment like the ones previously mentioned could increase the number of adult and minority volunteers from the community. However, there are still issues related to perceptions of the role of mentors and volunteer comfort levels that could hinder these efforts (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989; Furano, et. al., 1993; Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 2002). Therefore, other steps have to be taken by the BBBS agency here in Champaign county to reach members of the community, including parents and other adult volunteers, and make them a part of the mentoring process.

The current structure of the BBBS *School Buddies* program precludes any significant amount of parent and community involvement. As previously mentioned, the mentors involved with the program meet with their "littles" once a week on school grounds only. They are not allowed to meet with their mentees outside of the school setting and are dissuaded from participating in family and community events with their youth except for school programs and events. The rules that forbid mentors from having any contact with their littles outside of the school setting are designed to protect the youths as well as the mentors (Herrera, 1998; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). However, these rules exclude parents and community volunteers from having any real interaction with the mentors and therefore excludes them from the mentoring process.

It is not uncommon for school-based programs to limit mentor/mentee contact to the school setting. The school grounds provide a safe environment for those volunteers who worry about going into unsafe neighborhoods to meet their mentees (Herrera, 1998; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Additionally, school counselors, social workers and community outreach workers who serve as liaisons for the school-based programs can offer additional on-site support and assistance to volunteers (Herrera, 1998; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000).

However, even though directors and managers of school-based initiatives may prefer to keep mentor/mentee contact on school grounds, there are some school based mentoring programs that allow mentors to have contact with youth outside of the school setting (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). In fact, some school-based initiatives encourage that mentors have interaction with their mentees' parents and communities (Terry, 1999; Dortch, 2000). These programs allow their volunteers to meet youth and families at different community sponsored socials such as little league games, block parties, or street fairs (Terry, 1999). Other programs sponsor several family nights or family socials for the mentors, the mentees, and the mentees' families and friends. The directors of the *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County, however, do not seem to think that family and community involvement are necessary to the mentoring process. As previously stated they forbid mentors to have any contact with their littles outside of school and they do not sponsor socials where mentors can interact with their mentees and their mentees' families and friends. In fact the only event that the agents of the *School Buddies* program sponsor for mentor, mentees, and their families is the closing

party, which is held at the end of the academic year. Obviously this type of program

structure limits parent and community involvement in the mentoring process.

According to Jean Rhodes, the importance of family and community ties cannot

be excluded from the mentoring process (2002). Parental and community influences play

a major role in granting youth access to mentoring programs (2002). As Rhodes states,

the opportunities that youth have to build relationships with mentors is due in part to the

encouragement and guidance of the parents and other caring adults (2002). These caring

parents who enroll their children in planned mentoring programs are willing to endure

any discomforts or doubts that they may have about allowing a stranger to come into their

lives just so that their child can have more opportunities to be surrounded and influenced

by caring, responsible adults (Rhodes, 2002). Therefore, as Rhodes states a full

understanding of mentoring requires that everyone "consider...the family, community, and

cultural circumstances that lead youth to mentoring relationships and help sustain them

over time" (2002).

The *1000 Black Men of America* mentoring initiatives subscribe to a similar

philosophy when involving family and community in the mentoring process. In *The

Miracles of Mentoring,* author Thomas Dortch lists several key factors to successful

mentoring for their community based and site based programs. Among these keys it is

suggested that mentors communicate regularly with their mentees' parents and involve

themselves in their mentees school and community activities (Dortch, 2000). This list

also suggest the mentors become a part of civic actions in the mentees' communities such

as "cleaning a park or repairing a playground" (Dortch, 2000). According to Dortch,

these activities allow mentors to get to know and better understand their mentees which leads to better communication and better relationships (2000). The author also states that being sensitive to the concerns of the parents and families of their mentees is also key for the mentors (Dortch, 2000). Accordingly, mentors not only have a responsibility to their mentees but also to their mentees' families. A mentor's presence is supposed to help add further stability to the young person's environment and this cannot be accomplished if a mentor disrupts the balance of the family by trying to usurp the parents' role (Dortch, 2000).

A way for mentors to avoid these pitfalls is to have regular contact with their mentees' parents or guardians. Dortch claims that communication with parents is imperative for mentors because it allows them to better serve their mentees (2000). He claims that it is important to the mentoring process that the youth's family support the mentor/mentee relationship. The only way to gain this support is to include parents in on the decisions made concerning the youth (Dortch, 2000). Similarly, a mentor should also consult parents and understand their dreams and aspirations for their child when developing goals for their mentee. This approach keeps parents from feeling excluded and enables parents and mentors to work together to do what is best for the youth (Dortch, 2000).

This information is very significant when considering the *School Buddies* program here in Champaign-Urbana. The data collected in this study has shown that more parent and/or community involvement in the mentoring process could have been very beneficial to the mentor/mentee relationships. For example, of those students from Prairie School

who were interviewed only one student said that his parents had ever met his big. The

other students stated that their parents knew that they had mentors but that their parents

had never met them. Also as seen in Chapter Five, of those mentors who were surveyed,

almost thirty percent stated that it was not easy for them to relate to their mentees'

backgrounds (See Table 13). Also, of those mentors surveyed, over forty percent stated

that they could only relate to their littles "somewhat" (See Table 14). It is quite possible

that these volunteers found it challenging to relate well to their littles because of the

differences in their backgrounds and experiences. However, these difficulties were

probably only exacerbated by the limitations that the local BBBS agency placed on the

bigs' interaction with their littles' families. Perhaps if the mentors had been allowed to

spend more time with their mentees family outside of the school setting then they would

have gained a better understanding of their littles' backgrounds and experiences. Perhaps

more interaction with parents and other members of the children's social networks could

have given volunteers certain insights about their mentees and therefore helped them to

better "relate to" the youths. This type of interaction could have very well helped

volunteers better meet the needs of their mentees and feel more comfortable in their role

as mentor therefore possibly improving the mentor/mentee relationship.

Additionally, there were also other concerns expressed by volunteers from the

School Buddies program that further support more interaction between mentors and their

mentees' families and communities. When those bigs who were surveyed were asked,

what could have made them better mentors, forty-five percent felt that more time with

their mentees was needed while ten percent stated that wanted more knowledge of their

littles background. Another ten percent of those bigs who were surveyed responded that

being able to do things outside of school would have helped to make them better mentors

(See Table 18).

Again, allowing mentors to interact with littles and their families outside of the

school setting could have addressed all of these concerns. If volunteers with the *School*

Buddies program were allowed to see their littles for more than an hour a week in their

family or community settings, they would not only get the opportunity to create a stronger

bond with the youths but they would also get a chance to learn more about their

youths' families and backgrounds. This would provide insights that could help them

better understand their littles and better communicate with them. Additionally, this

would give bigs the opportunity to forge a sort of alliance with their youths' parents

which could also help to strengthen the mentor/mentee bond. As Thomas Dortch stated,

mentors have to be sensitive to the needs and wants of their mentees' parents;

establishing this type of comraderie with parents helps to give more support to the

mentoring relationship (2000).

It has been observed that the *School Buddies* program has instituted rules that

prohibits mentor/mentee interaction outside of the school setting and discourages mentors

from having any interaction with their mentees families. Though these rules are designed

to protect the interests of both the bigs and their littles, these rules in some instances work

to inhibit the mentoring relationship. From the data that has been discussed it seems that

some of the mentors involved in this program did not feel that they knew their mentees

well enough nor that they had enough of an opportunity to get to know them. Research

has proven that strong mentoring bonds do not form overnight and that it takes a great deal of time to establish enduring mentoring relationships (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989; Freedman, 1993; Sipe, 1999; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Dortch, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Therefore, if the agents of the *School Buddies* program really want to help their bigs and littles to establish strong and enduring bonds, then more effort has to be made to allow the pairs to spend time together and to interact on a social as well as an academic level.

If bigs are allowed to see their littles in different environments and different settings then they will have an opportunity to learn more about them. Additionally, littles will get a chance to see a different side of their bigs. Also, parents will get a chance to learn more about the adults who are mentoring their children. If parents are able to communicate with teachers and counselors about their children's academic well being then why should they not be able to have the same type of relationship with their children's mentors. The hands-off approach that has been adopted by the *School Buddies program* is not only unwise, but it is also unrealistic. How can parents be asked to trust a total stranger whom they have never seen or spoken to, to nurture, love, and positively influence their child?

Even if the agency does not want to suspend the rules that preclude mentor interaction with mentees and mentees' families outside of the school setting, certain adjustments should be made to better accommodate the mentor/mentee relationships. Perhaps if more social were sponsored by the agency both on and off of school grounds a couple of times through out each semester then mentors, mentees, parents, family

members and friends could all come together and learn more about each other. As stated

by the community outreach worker from Prairie School "...we should have more family

get-togethers definitely...yeah more time. I don't think an hour a week is enough. We

should have more interaction with the parents. Because you know that they are a part of

their child's life and I think the parent needs to be involved with that..."

In understanding the importance of parental and community involvement in the

School Buddies program, their participation should not be limited to the occasional social

or outing with the mentors and mentees in the program. Parents as well as community

members should be actively involved in the structuring of the program. It is not expected

that the BBBS agency would completely dismantle the present design of the program to

accommodate Champaign-Urbana parents and communities. In that the Big Brothers Big

Sisters agency, has been in existence for almost a century it is quite obvious that they

would have structures for their programs already in place. However, agents could still

benefit from the input and expertise of parents and community members who better

understand the needs and of their children.

Thomas Dortch points out that *The 100 Black Men of America* approach to

mentoring means tailoring each program to fit the needs of the community it serves

(2000). He claims that none of the mentoring programs within their organization can be

exactly alike because no two communities are exactly alike (Dortch, 2000).

Accommodations and adjustments have to be made so that each program effectively

meets the needs of each community that it is serving. Meeting those needs requires some

level of input from the parents and dialogue with the community, therefore, regular

contact with families and community members is seen as an integral part to the structure of the programs sponsored by *The 100 Black Men* (Dortch, 2000). In an interview with the director of the African-American Cultural Program at the University of Illinois, concerns were expressed pertaining to the *School Buddies* program and its relation to the community. According to this university administrator, he was not even aware that the *School Buddies* program existed and claimed that there was a strong likelihood that most members of the community were not familiar with the program. He expressed that if a program is designed to be a part of and function as a service to a community, then members of the community should be aware of its existence and its goals. Additionally, he stated that members of the community should have the opportunity to play a part in structuring those goals. This administrator stated that, there are several ways in which a community based committee or focus group could improve the *School Buddies* program. By expressing their ideas and concerns, these parents and community members could help BBBS program managers and directors customize the *School Buddies* initiative to better fit the needs of the children and their community.

> This program is like a foreign entity in our mists. The best way for an organization that is already outside of the community to connect with the community is they got to have people from the community involved in the initial planning...on a regular and consistent basis. They've got to be involved in the planning aspects of it....First of all it gives them a sense of who the community is and it gives the community a chance to see that these people are not just our for money. They actually want to provide a service. (University of Illinois Administrator, personal communication, September 24, 2003).

Also, the U of I administrator suggested that community members would be ideal in helping with the training of volunteers. He expressed that there have been cases with

other programs similar to *School Buddies* where volunteers were not properly prepared for their roles either as tutors or mentors. He claims that now the community is seeking more accountability from these programs and wanting to be sure that the services that they are providing are actually going to be beneficial to the students they seek to reach.

> It's important to have people in the community who know what the issues are have a significant amount of input into what those students are actually doing when they go there...I think that the people from the community can train the students to understand in terms of just who are these people that they're going to be working with. It's not good for the college students to be thrown into a situation where they aren't prepared. That's part of what we are dealing with now. We have to go into a direction of true accountability and true communication between the people who are in need of the services and the people who are providing the service. (University of Illinois Administrator, personal communication, September 24, 2003).

He believes that more communication with the community will not only help to provide the programs with a better sense of what the needs are, but it will also give the community a chance to play a more active role in those programs like *School Buddies*. This administrator firmly believes that members from the community have a great deal to offer in the way of insight, experience, and expertise and that they should not be overlooked as possible resources for the *School Buddies* program. He also states that the presence of these programs in the community mean that they have to establish a dialogue with members of the community if they want to fully meet the needs of the children they seek to serve. "The best way for a program like this to get connected to the community and its needs is to talk to the community." This type of relationship, however, requires that the program managers and directors actively pursue community involvement by

seeking out community members and asking for their input and assistance in the programs' efforts to serve the community's children.

One final suggestion that could increase community involvement and input would require that the local BBBS agency hire some one from the Champaign-Urbana community to work with the program either full-time or part-time. The present program manager who lives in a town more than twenty-minutes away from the Champaign-Urbana, has to drive in to the local office every day. There is also a part-time agent who works with the program, however, she also commutes from another town outside of the area. It is difficult to imagine that these agents could have a full understanding of the community, its children, and their needs when they are not a part of the community. An agent who lives in a town more than twenty minutes away would not know the full scope of the social, political, and economic dynamics that influence the daily lives of the students and families that the program seeks to serve. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that an agent from within the area would have better access to certain insights and resources that could help him or her better serve the youths, volunteers, and families involved with the program.

Additionally, having a member of the community as an employee of the local agency could also work to increase the number of community adult and minority volunteers. It was discovered in a study of several BBBS agencies in various cities across the country that those agencies who had the highest numbers of minority volunteers, had minority program managers and directors as a part of the local staff (Furano, et. al., 1993). This same reasoning could be used for the *School Buddies* program here in

Champaign County where most of the volunteers are Caucasian, University Students who are from areas outside of the Champaign-Urbana community. Having agents who are actually from within the community, particularly the minority or working class community, could help to diversify the programs pool of volunteers. A local BBBS agent who lived in the community among the families of the students that the program seeks to serve would have better knowledge of where and how to recruit volunteers but also enlist other forms of community support.

As stated by the director of the African-American Cultural Program, the best way for the *School Buddies* program to serve the community is to get involved with the community and "have a physical presence." This means involving community members not just as volunteers, but as advisors and paid employees for the program. In a summary of the recent BBBS summit, National Executive Director Thomas McKenna stated that the organization was now working toward helping their volunteers become more involved in the families and communities of the children they serve. "Our vision is one of caring adults in the life of every child in need. This is not a vision that can be realized by parachuting volunteers in and throwing them at the kids...We've got to look at the whole of communities--not just one individual linked up with another on a volunteer basis..." McKenna claims that in order to broaden the scope and service of the organization volunteers must be prepared to become actively engaged in the issues and concerns that affect the youths and their environments. If the national vision for Big Brothers Big Sisters has indeed become to serve youth not just as individuals but to reach out and serve the families and communities that they are a part of, then that means initiatives like

School Buddies must begin to make the communities and families that they serve an integral part of their program structure and design.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY

Mentoring Infrastructure in Perspective

As previously mentioned, this study was not designed to measure the academic achievement or social and behavioral improvements of the students involved in the *School Buddies* program but to examine the organization of the program and assess if its foundational designs and structures offer an environment that is conducive for successful mentoring. In an attempt to address this several questions were explored. What are the key components to a successful mentoring program? Are there areas in the design and structure of organized mentoring that need to be re-evaluated? What are some major factors in program structure that can foster positive mentoring relationships? Is it possible that school based mentoring can be used to help bridge the gap between the school and community? After an effort to thoroughly examine these questions, this study has revealed that there are aspects of the *School Buddies* infrastructure that should be altered in order to better meet the needs of the students being served.

In Chapter One, it was observed how an organization's infrastructure can influence the manner in which it functions. According to researchers, the infrastructure, or underlying base of an organization, is what enables organizations to produce and accomplish their objectives (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). The structural base could consist of every conceivable aspect of the organization from its missions and founding principles to its standards and governing by-laws. Essentially, the

infrastructure is a culmination of those foundational components that enable an organization to function; the design or model of that infrastructure is the key factor that determines *how well* that organization will function (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996).

It is understood that the major focus of most organizations is to achieve set goals and objectives, and in an effort to accomplish these goals most organizations tend to function as a bureaucracy (Weber, 1947). The structural components of the bureaucracy which consist of a hierarchal structure of authority, a division of labor, shared values, a certain level of impersonality, rules, and a focus on technical competence are linked explicitly together by the companies goals or objectives (Weber, 1947; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In other words the components of the bureaucratic model, which create the organizational infrastructure, are the characteristics that enable the accomplishment of the organizational goals (Meryer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). These goals are usually stated formally within the organization's mandate vision or mission statement (Jones, 1996).

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America like other complex organizations possesses many of the major characteristics of a bureaucracy. Within the agency there is a hierarchal system of authority with national directors, regional directors, and local program directors. Undoubtedly there is an endless number of details involved in the running of Big Brothers Big Sisters, countless committees, committee chairs, programs, processes, procedures, rules, standards, and by-laws that comprise the infrastructure of such a complex organizations. Among these many details are also the processes that

influence volunteer recruitment and support as well as the guidelines that determine the level of interaction between mentors their mentees and their mentees' families. The challenge for Big Brothers Big Sisters as well as other complex organizations is to design an infrastructure that allows them to effectively accomplish organizational goals.

In an effort to better understand the infrastructure and how it affects the function of the BBBS organization, it is necessary to first examine the national mission. The goals of BBBS are plainly stated in the organization's mission which clearly proclaims that the major objective of the agency "...is to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth primarily through a professionally-supported, one-to-one relationship with a caring adult, and to assist them in achieving their highest potential as they grow to become confident, competent, and caring individuals by providing committed volunteers, national leadership, and standards of excellence" (BBBS, 2002). In theory, every chapter of BBBS is dedicated to the charge of making a "positive difference in the lives of children and youth" including the BBBS agency here in Champaign County. However, the manner in which individual chapters choose to execute this charge may vary.

Ultimately, the components of the infrastructure – the numerous processes and procedures, the director and committee chairs, and countless standards and guidelines – both locally and nationally are all linked together for the purpose of achieving the organization's national goal. However, it must be kept in mind that for the goals to be effectively achieved, an infrastructure that supports those goals has to be in place. As is has been previously stated, the manner in which goals are achieved, if they are achieved at all, is strongly influenced by the infrastructure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990;

Jones, 1996) and accordingly, the very structure and foundation of an organization can potentially obstruct the formal goals and objectives of that organization (Jones, 1996). Taking this into consideration, it is reasonable to examine the procedures, practices, rules, and guidelines of the BBBS *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County more carefully to assess how the program's local and national infrastructure impact the achievement of program goals.

Big Brothers Big Sisters' primary goal of "making a positive difference in the lives of children and youth primarily through a professionally supported One-to-One relationship with a caring adult... by providing committed volunteers" is clearly stated in the organization's national mission statement (BBBS, 2002). Agencies seek to accomplish this goal by matching youth with adults and creating an environment in which they can form a strong, solid, lasting bond. This bond is at the core of the mentor/mentee relationship, and the quality of this bond is essentially what dictates the impact that a mentor has on a young person's life - positive or negative (Rhodes, 2002).

There are several things that can determine the quality of the mentor/mentee bond. A myriad of influences such as mentor/mentee interests, the comfort level of volunteers, mentor preparation, mentors ability to relate to and communicate with mentees, the amount of time that mentors and mentees spend together, and the manner in which in that time is spent can all influence the quality of the mentoring relationship. Many of these influential factors are themselves strongly seriously impacted by the design and structure of the program. In fact some researchers contend that there are certain structural components such as volunteer recruitment and screening, training and orientation, and

supervision and support that are crucial to the success of a mentoring program (Sipe, 1999; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Without these infrastructural essentials, it is all but impossible to expect to have a program environment that is conducive to the establishment and maintenance of strong mentoring bonds (Rhodes, 2002). Therefore the equation for a successful BBBS mentoring program - that is one that enables a caring adult to have a positive impact on a child's life - must include an infrastructure that facilitates the creation and maintenance of strong bonds. Upon examining the *School Buddies* initiative, it was discovered that several key structural components were missing from the program equation.

A Summary of *School Buddies'* Infrastructure

One of the key components found missing from the *School Buddies* initiative was seen in the programs recruitment methods. Overwhelmingly almost all of the volunteers involved with the school-based component of the BBBS mentoring program here in Champaign County were University of Illinois Students. In fact, the University is for this program seemingly the primary source for volunteer recruitment. Taking advantage of the University as a resource for volunteers in and of itself is not problematic, however, choosing to focus on university students as primary source for volunteers jeopardizes the quality of the mentor/mentee bond in a couple of ways. First, it has already been proven that adults between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five have an extremely high rate of termination in mentor/mentee relationships (Rhodes, 2002). Additionally, even though college students are seen as an excellent pool from which to draw volunteers, most

college students are not able to balance the rigors of their academic lives with the demands of being a mentor and therefore tend to terminate mentor/mentee relationships prematurely (Sipe, 1999). Secondly, in the case of the *School Buddies* program, several adjustments were made to the design and structure of the program calendar in an effort to better accommodate these University students. These accommodations in their effort to accommodate the schedules of the University students, worked to decrease the amount of time that mentors and mentees had to spend together by several weeks. Clearly having volunteers who are prone to high termination rates and having to decrease the number of opportunities for mentor/mentee meetings to accommodate these volunteers poses a threat to the quality of the mentor/mentee relationship. Forming strong mentoring bond takes time (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et. al., 1993; Herrera, 1998; Sipe, 1998; Dortch, 2000; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002), and therefore requires volunteers who are willing and able to take advantage of every opportunity to communicate and spend time with their protégés. The programs insistence to rely on University of Illinois students decreased its chances of finding volunteers who possess these qualities and therefore caused the quality of the mentor/mentee bond to be jeopardized.

The heavy reliance on University students for volunteers also caused the program to neglect efforts to recruit more from within the community, which also hindered the possible quality of the mentor/mentee bond. First, the community consists of a very diverse population of citizens that may serve as excellent volunteers to students. There is for example large numbers of retired citizens in the community who are, according to

research, an untapped resource in planned mentoring efforts (Sipe, 1998; Rhodes, 2002). Many programs in fact are starting to look more to senior citizens because one, they have very positive results when working with at-risk adolescents and two because these members of the community have more time and more willingness to devote to mentoring efforts (Styles & Morrow, 1992; Sipe, 1998; Hererra, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Recruiting more community members could have given program managers and directors access to these caring adults who had more time available to dedicate to the rigors of a mentoring relationship.

Also, the members of the Champaign-Urbana community could offer the students in the program a great deal in the sense of heritage. There have been many contributions made to the community by the citizens of Champaign-Urbana, particularly among the African-American citizens. Having volunteers who were familiar with this history and who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences, could have been a great asset to the youth in the program. Also, volunteers from within the community could have shared with the youths additional insights about growing up and surviving in Champaign-Urbana. These would all have been invaluable lessons for the students in the program and could have helped to forge close, mentor/mentee bonds. Clearly, not making use of community members as mentors in the *School Buddies* initiative limited the programs access to those volunteers who had the time and special insights that would have been beneficial in establishing strong mentor/mentee bonds.

Another area in the infrastructure of the *School Buddies* program that needs to be reassessed is volunteer orientation and training. Once volunteers are brought into a

program, they have to have orientation that can acquaint them with their roles as mentor, and pre and post-match training and support that can continuously prepare them for this role. No matter if the volunteers are coming as University students who are unfamiliar with the community or as long time members of the communities in which the youths are from, training is still necessary to help prepare them for their roles as mentors. It was discovered in this study that the volunteers involved with the *School Buddies* program had no type of orientation or training prior to or after the matches were made.

Instituting orientation and training as a part of the match process could have helped volunteers in the *School Buddies* program deal with different issues such as knowing how to spend time with their youths, knowing how to relate to youths' backgrounds, knowing how to communicate with youths, understanding what was expected of them as mentors, understanding the importance of commitment, and knowing how to terminate a mentor/mentee relationship. All of these issues came up as concerns for the volunteers involved with the program, however, with orientation and training some of these concerns could have been lessened if not eliminated all together. Because orientation and training provides "important opportunities to ensure that youth and mentors share a common understanding of their respective roles and to help mentors develop realistic expectations of what they can accomplish" (Sipe, 1998), it would have bettered prepared the volunteers in this program to face the challenges of mentoring and of building strong mentor/mentee relationships. In that the volunteers in the *School Buddies* program were coming from completely different backgrounds than their littles,

training and orientation could have also helped bigs better understand their littles'

backgrounds and therefore "bridge their differences" (Sipe, 1998).

The final aspect of the *School Buddies* program's infrastructure that needs to be

re-evaluated are the rules that determine mentor interaction with mentees and mentees'

families and the rules that dictate parental and community involvement. It has been

demonstrated throughout the research that many programs are discovering the benefit of

including parental and community interaction with mentors and parental and community

involvement with the mentoring process (Terry, 1999; Dortch, 2000; Herrera, Sipe, and

McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). Even the National Executive Director of Big

Brothers Big Sisters is challenging their agencies to help mentors become more involved

in the lives and communities their mentees (2002). This type of interaction is not only

key to the mentoring process in that it gives volunteers additional time to spend with their

mentees and an opportunity to better understand who their mentees are and where they

come from, but it also affords volunteers the chance to better serve their mentees by

giving them the opportunity to know and address the needs of their mentees' parents and

communities (Terry, 1999; Dortch, 2000; BBBS, 2002). This type of interaction, though

apparently very crucial to the mentoring process, was found to be missing from the

infrastructure of the *School Buddies* program.

There are explicit rules that prohibit the volunteers in the *School Buddies* program

from having any interaction with their mentees outside of the school setting. Also,

interaction between the mentees' families, neighbors, church members, and any other

members of their social networks is also strongly discouraged. The mentoring process is

to take place on the school grounds and if volunteers desire to have additional contact with their mentees or their families then they must enroll in the agency's community-based component. The only time that the mentors get a chance to interact with mentees and their families is during the program's closing party, which takes place during the last week of the program. Though these rules have been put in place to supposedly protect volunteers, youths, and their families, they are compromising the agencies ability to facilitate the establishment of strong, enduring mentoring bonds.
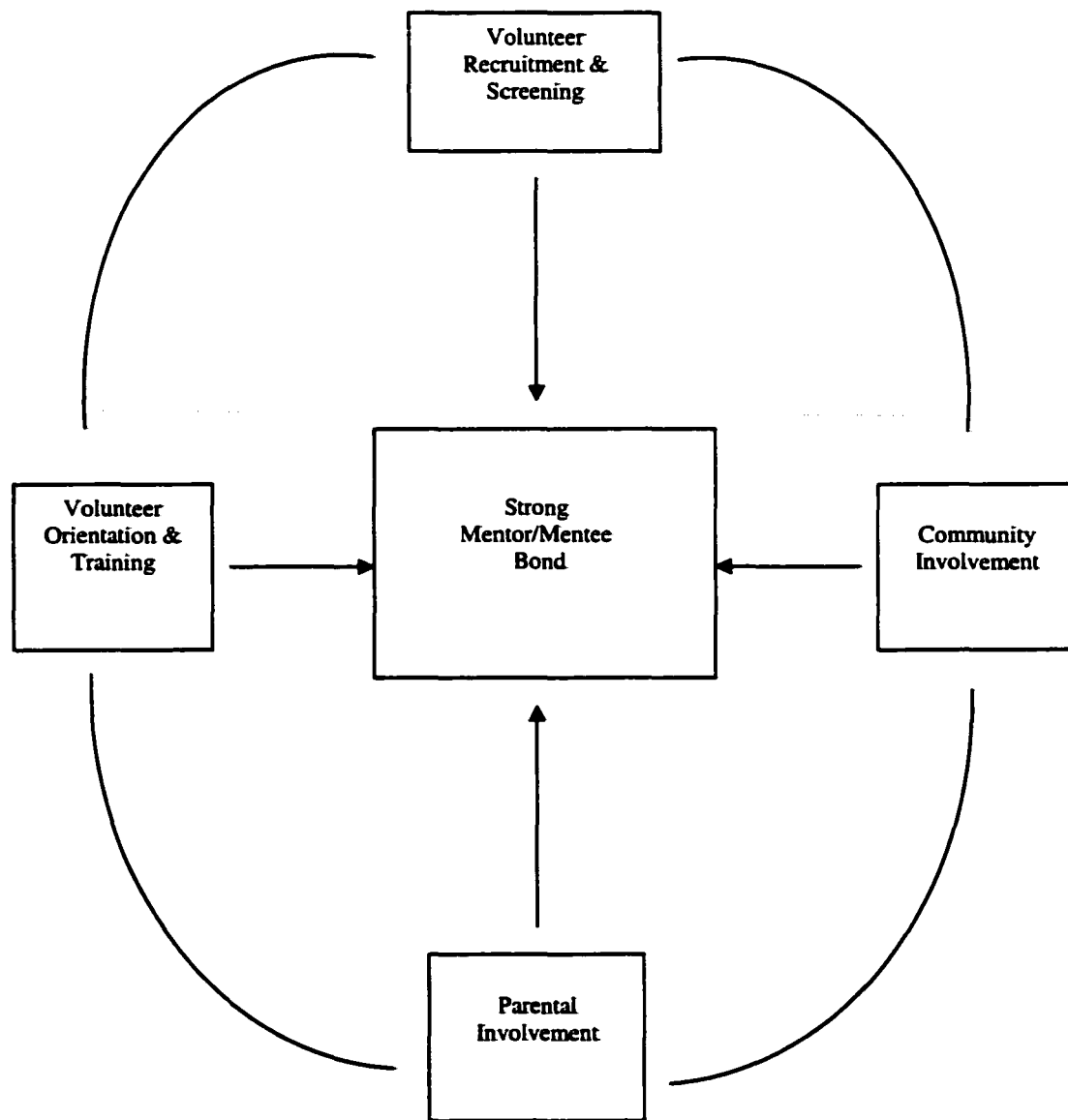
Clearly, allowing mentors to see their littles and their families outside of the school setting would give the mentors and littles more time to spend together and more opportunities to build a strong bond. Among those volunteers in the *School Buddies* program who were interviewed and surveyed, several mentioned that they wanted more time to spend with their mentees. Also, other adults involved with the program, such as the community outreach worker at Prairie mentioned the need for more mentor/mentee interaction and more interaction between mentors and their mentees' families.

In addition to providing more time for mentors and mentees to spend strengthening their bond, this increased interaction and involvement among mentors, mentees' families, and community members could also give volunteers insights on how to better relate to and serve their mentees. Again, among those bigs in the program who were surveyed and interviewed, there were some who stated that they had a difficult time relating to their littles and some who expressed and interest in knowing more about their littles' backgrounds and doing things with their littles' outside of school. Giving the volunteers an opportunity to explore and nurture their mentor/mentee relationship in an

environment outside of school and with the assistance of parents and other members of the community could greatly benefit the mentoring relationship. However, having rules in the infrastructure that preclude this interaction can compromise the quality of the mentoring relationship by jeopardizing the agency's ability to create an environment that is conducive for the establishment and maintenance of strong, enduring mentor/mentee bonds.

If the suspension of those rules that limit interaction between volunteers and the parents and communities of the children that they are serving is not an option for the agents of the *School Buddies* program, then there are other alternatives available that can help off-set the potential threat that these rules pose to the mentoring relationship. Parental and community involvement and interaction can be increased if the agency would sponsor more socials and outings for mentors, mentees, and their mentees families. If these events were held several times through out the academic year, then mentors and mentees would be able to spend more time together and mentors would be able to interact with the families and friends of their mentees. Additionally, the agency could also enlist the aid of parents and community members to serve as advisors to the program. They can offer the program directors and managers, who are not from the Champaign-Urbana area, regular community events and developments and how these developments may or may not affect the children in the program. Also, these parent and community advisors can offer the BBBS agents their ideas and concerns on how to better serve their children. Additionally, the parent and community advisors could also serve as a resource to help

the agency recruit volunteers and build coalitions with area businesses, churches, and

other service organizations.

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Figure 1. Relation of infrastructure to strong mentor/mentee bonds.

Figure 1 offers an example of how the infrastructure of a model mentoring program should be designed. As the figure suggests, strong mentor/mentee bonds are directly affected by parental and community involvement and volunteer recruitment, screening, orientation, and training. An infrastructure that encompasses all of these components and recognizes them as essential parts of the mentoring process are crucial is absolutely mandatory for establishing and maintaining strong, positive mentoring relationships.

Obviously, those infrastructural changes that have been suggested for the *School Buddies* program cannot happen over night. It will take a great deal of time and energy on the part of BBBS to plan, strategize, and make these changes a reality. However, if the national goal of the organization "...to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, primarily through a professionally supported one-to-one relationship with a caring adult...by providing committed volunteers..." (BBBS, 2002) is to be fully realized then efforts have to be made to put an infrastructure in place that will facilitate the accomplishment of this goal. This means creating a program structure that can support and nurture the establishment of those strong mentoring bonds that are at the core of those one-to-one relationships that make a positive difference.

Research Implications and Limitations

Planned mentoring has been seen as a viable method of improving the social behaviors of this nation's at-risk youth for more than two decades (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et. al, 1993; Herrera, 1998; Sipe, 1998;

Dortch, 2000; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000; Rhodes, 2002). In the last few years, the mentoring movement has seemed to swell to enormous heights as researchers, educators, and administrators strive to understand the aspects of mentoring that make it a successful source of intervention for disadvantaged youth. As the amount the research on mentoring has continued to increase, more literature has begun to address the educational benefits of mentoring. In light of this, organizations like Big Brothers Big Sisters have begun to take their primarily community based efforts into the school setting believing that these volunteers can not only put more at-risk youth in contact with caring adults, but that these adult volunteers can also help to improve the educational achievement of disadvantaged youth (Herrera, 1998; BBBS, 2000; Rhodes, 2002).. However, in the mist of the excitement surrounding community based and more recently school-based mentoring, essential truths have neglected to be told.

The fact that mentoring programs can potentially have a positive impact on the social and academic achievements of at-risk youth has already been proven (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Ferguson, 1990; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et. al., 1993; Bush, 1994; Herrera, 1998; BBBS, 2000; Thompson and Vance, 2001; Rhodes, 2002). There is a flurry of research that demonstrates how youth who are involved in mentoring programs have better school attendance, have improved scores on standardized test, are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, have better attitudes toward school, their peers, their parents (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988; Ferguson, 1990; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Freedman, 1993; Furano, et. al., 1993; Bush, 1994; Herrera, 1998; BBBS, 2000; Thompson & Vance, 2001; Rhodes, 2002).

However it must be understood that before volunteers can be expected to have a positive impact on youth, a structure must be in place that will allow mentors and mentees to form and maintain strong bonds. Without these bonds it is almost impossible to expect volunteers to have a positive impact (Rhodes, 2002). It is unfortunate that, despite the significance that structual influences like pre and post-match training have on the quality of mentoring bonds, many programs fail to incorporate these components into their infrastructure (Rhodes, 2002).

In the case of the BBBS *School Buddies* program, many of the components necessary for the infrastructure of a successful mentoring initiative are missing. The program needs several adjustments in the areas of recruitment, training, and increased community involvement before it can be expected to fully serve its students. Understanding this is significant not just for BBBS agents, program directors and managers, but it is also significant for the schools who open their doors to this program and the parents, children, and communities involved. Changes in the youths academic achievements or social behaviors can not realistically be expected because the volunteers and youths who are a part of the mentoring effort are functioning under the major disadvantages of the program's structural limitations.

This knowledge from a theoretical approach can influence the way that researchers understand and study mentoring programs. A clearer perception of what makes mentoring programs successful and the various aspects the can limit that success can also have implications on how policies that support the use of mentoring initiatives in schools are written. Additionally, this study has significant implications not only on the

way that future programs are designed, but it can also influence the way that already

existing programs continue to function. From a more practical standpoint, this study has

implications on how schools and parents view, support and interact with different

mentoring initiatives. Before schools open their doors to mentoring programs that

promise to make positive changes in the lives of their students, school administrators

should investigate the program more carefully to determine if there is a structure in place

that can realistically facilitate these changes. Also, before parents enroll their students in

these programs, thorough examination should be performed to determine if the program

is designed in a manner that will help to adequately meet the needs of their children and

in a manner that will allow parental input and involvement in the mentoring process. It

must be fully understood, by teachers, counselors, students, volunteers, parents, program

managers, agents, and all others involved that the mentoring process is a lengthy one and

if real benefits are to be gained then the program has to be designed in a manner that can

help create, support, and sustain the strong bonds that are key to a successful mentoring

relationship. It is safe to assume that without a strong foundation *i.e.* the proper

infrastructure, on which to build these mentor/mentee relationships, the expectation that

these relationships will improve social and educational achievement of students is highly

improbable.

Despite the conclusive findings of this study, there are several limitations that

could be explored for the sake of future research implications. One such limitation of the

research concerns that amount of time in which the study was conducted. The author

only got a chance to examine how the program has functioned over the last couple of

years. A longitudinal study that could examine the program, its procedures, practices, and various changes over a period of several years could better assess how the infrastructure influences the programs ability to help establish and maintain strong mentoring bonds and therefore accomplish organizational goals.

Similarly, the amount of time in which the researcher had to spend with the mentor/mentee pairs also posed limitations to the research. The scope of this study only allowed the author to spend time with a few of the mentor/mentee matches over the course of several weeks. However, an opportunity to interact with all of these pairs over a longer period of time could have given the author an opportunity to monitor how the mentor/mentee relationships were developing, if they were beneficial to students, and if these relationships were able to endure the challenges of the mentoring process. These details would have provided a clearer understanding of how the infrastructure of the program may or may not have impacted the way that these relationships, developed, progressed, and matured over time.

Also, the scope of this research could be broadened to incorporate the examination of the social behavior and academic achievement of the students involved with the program. Though, the current focus of the study concentrates only on those structural components that lend to successful mentoring, including a close examination of students' grades, test scores, promotion, and attitude toward school, teachers and peers could help to support the necessity of those key structural components in a mentoring program. A better understanding of how the mentoring relationship is impacting the students' social and academic achievements can help to determine if the infrastructure is

facilitating those strong mentoring bonds that enable positive results such as higher grades, higher test scores, and overall better attitudes among students. However, to broaden the scope of this research so that it considers the academic and social behaviors of the students involved would again require a longitudinal study so that the students' academic and/or social progress could be monitored over an extended period of time.

Lastly, more interaction with the mentees' parents and other members of the community could have provided a clearer picture of the *School Buddies* program's infrastructure. It was easier to gain access to the students in the program than it was to gain access to their parents. However, if an opportunity to dialogue with parents had been presented then it would have been very beneficial to get their perception of the program and how it is benefiting their children. Also, this interaction could have given the author a chance to poll parents and get their views on the parents' role in the mentoring process. Additionally, interviews with parents could have given them the chance to express their thoughts and concerns about the program and any ideas on how to make it more beneficial for their children.

Similar to interaction with mentees' parents, interaction with community members could have also proven to be very beneficial to understanding the program infrastructure. In speaking with the U of I administrator who is also a long-time resident of the Champaign-Urbana area, it was discovered that members of the community could offer a great deal of input as to how the program can best benefit the children it seeks to serve. Dialogue with community members such as former educators, local ministers, civic leaders, laborers, and business owners could have offered insights on the community's

feelings about the programs existence, their understanding of its purpose, and their views on how to make the community a bigger part of the program's efforts. All of these additional findings could provide a clearer picture of how the infrastructure of the program functions as either a help or hindrance to agencies ability to create an environment that is conducive for the creation and sustaining of strong mentor/mentee bonds.

The Final Words...

No study that seeks to provide an understanding as to how, educational interventions, policies, and/or practices function to benefit the whole of the educational system can ever be considered final. As new discoveries are made, research develops to accommodate these discoveries. However, in relation to the *School Buddies* mentoring initiative, certain conclusion can definitely be made about the program's infrastructure and how it affects the long-term impact of the program's ability to positively influence students' academic achievement and social behavior.

Plainly stated, without the proper infrastructure, a program's ability to achieve positive mentoring outcomes is severely jeopardized. Program infrastructure has become so significant that the National Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Thomas McKenna has begun to focus on "the importance of developing an infrastructure for effective mentoring including recruitment, selection, screening, training, and on-going support" (BBBS, 2002). Additionally, the National Executive Director, called for adjustments to the infrastructure that would support volunteers' increased

interaction with their mentees' communities in an effort to better address the needs of the youth and the families involved in the program (BBBS, 2002).

The infrastructure, which can consist of various rules, guidelines, practices, and procedures, is what enables organizations to function and achieve formal goals; it is the very foundation that supports the organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Morgan, 1990; Jones, 1996). It has to be solid and firm yet have the ability to expand or change to accommodate the developing needs of the organization. In relation to mentoring organizations, an infrastructure without certain essential components, is shaky and can only offer limited support to the development of mentoring relationships. The infrastructure of the *School Buddies* program here in Champaign County offers and unstable foundation for the agency to build the kinds of positive mentoring relationships that can have positive outcomes for students. Therefore, if the agency is indeed sincere about "making a positive difference in the lives of children and youth," (BBBS, 2002) then efforts have to be made to create an infrastructure that can facilitate the kinds of relationships necessary in making a positive impact in the lives of youth.

Obviously no structure can survive without a foundation stable enough to sustain it. It must be realized by the directors of the *School Buddies* initiative, that the key to a strong program is a strong foundation and a strong foundation depends heavily on a stable, consistent infrastructure. Therefore, if a more stable infrastructure is not implemented within this program then its very foundation will give way and the entire edifice of the *School Buddies* mentoring initiative will crumble and sink.

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APPENDIX A

LETTERS TO PARTICIPANTS

January 23, 2002

Dear Parent:

My name is Kashelia B. Jackson and I am a student intern with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Champaign County. I am also a graduate student in Educational Policy Studies here at the University of Illinois. Presently, I am, with the assistance of my academic advisor, heavily involved in researching the *School Buddies* Program that your child is a part of. We would like to include your child along with several of his or her peers in this study which will examine the benefits of the Big Brothers Big Sisters' *School Buddies* Program and how the program impacts children and the community.

With your permission we would like to, over the next several months, observe your child with his or her mentor as well as conduct several interviews with your child. Your child will be asked to participate in three fifteen minute interviews which will take place during the time your child meets with his or her mentor. These interviews will not interfere with any of your child's class time or any other academic responsibilities. Through these observations and interviews we hope to gain a general sense of your child's attitude toward his or her mentor and the program. The purpose of this study is to gain some understanding as to how beneficial this program is to its students and to members of the Champaign-Urbana community. Your child's participation is this study is on a voluntary basis; no child will be forced to participate if he or she does not wish to. To insure this we will ask for permission from students as well as parents. Your child may stop taking part in this project any time he or she wishes. You also have the right to terminate your child's involvement at anytime for any reason without risk of penalty. You may be assured that if you decide that you do not want your child to participate in this study, this decision will not reflect negatively on your child's academic record. Also, any information that is gained through this study will be kept confidential and will not become a part of your child's academic record.

If you have any questions or if you would prefer that your child not be a part of this study please contact me, Kashelia B. Jackson, at 217-328-3116 or by e-mail at kbjackso@uiuc.edu. You can contact James D. Anderson at 217-333-2446 or via e-mail at janders@uiuc.edu. Thanks you in advance for your time and consideration. I look forward to working with you and your child on this project.

Sincerely,

Kashelia B. Jackson, Graduate Student   James D. Anderson, Professor

Hello! I am from the University of Illinois and I am here to find out how you feel about being in Big Brothers Big Sisters School Buddies Program.

Over the next few months I will come and visit you and your mentor to find out how well you two are getting along. From time to time I will ask you questions about your mentor and the program. I want to find out how you feel the program has helped you, if you like your mentor, and if you are glad to have a School Buddy. Your involvement in this project is voluntary - this means you don't have to participate if you don't want to and you may quit anytime you like. All of the information that is gathered will be kept private and will have no bearing on any of your grades or your permanent school record.

If your or your parents have any questions you may call me, Kashelia B. Jackson, at 217-328-3116 or you can e-mail me at kbjackso@uiuc.edu.

_____

Student Signature   Date

January 23, 2002

I am Kashelia B. Jackson and I am a student intern with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Champaign County. I am also a graduate student here at the University of Illinois. Presently, I am, with the assistance of my academic advisor, heavily involved in researching the *School Buddies* Program that you volunteer with. I would like to ask you to participate in this study which I am conducting through the department of Educational Policy Studies here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The purpose of this study is to examine the potential benefits of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) school based mentoring programs. This project seeks to explore how this program and others like it can be made more beneficial for its students as well as the entire Champaign-Urbana community. In this study you will be expected to participate in two forty-five minute interviews in which I will ask you to discuss your ideas about the mentoring program, the communities understanding of the program, and how beneficial it has been for students. The interviews which will be audio-taped will be kept confidential. It may be necessary to quote or make reference to specific individuals, however, discretion will be used so that no one's families, livelihoods, or reputations are put at risk. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary; if at any point you wish to terminate your participation, you may do so. You may also decline to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

If you have any questions please contact me, Kashelia B. Jackson, at 217-328-3116 or e-mail me at kbjackso@uiuc.edu. You may also contact James D. Anderson at 217-333-2446 or e-mail him at janders@uiuc.edu.

I have read and understand the above information and willingly agree to participate in the study described above.

_____

Signature   Date

April 22, 2002

You are invited to participate in a research project on the experiences and attitudes of mentors involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) School Based Mentoring Program. This project will be conducted by Kashelia B. Jackson and Dr. James D. Anderson from the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The purpose of this project is to gain an understanding about the Big Brothers Big Sisters School Based Mentoring Program and the benefits it offers to the students and community which it serves. This questionnaire will help us better understand the nature of the program and the mentoring process from the mentors' view points.

In this project, Miss Jackson will administer a questionnaire during a special meeting that will be called during the spring semester of 2002. You will be asked to complete the questionnaire to the best of your ability and provide complete and detailed answers. The information obtained from the questionnaire will be anonymous and confidential. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Kashelia B. Jackson by telephone at 328-3116 or by e-mail at *kbjackso@uiuc.edu.*, or you may contact Dr. James D. Anderson at 333-2446 or by e-mail at *janders@uiuc.edu.*

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have been offered a copy of this consent form.

Signature   Date

APPENDIX B

MENTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete all questions to the best of your ability.

1. Your gender:

   A. Male
   B. Female

2. The gender of your little:

   A. Male
   B. Female

3. Your race:

   A. Caucasian B. Native American C. African-American
   D. Latino   E. Asian/Pacific Islander   F. Other (Specify)_____

4. The race of your little:

   A. Caucasian B. Native American C. African-American
   D. Latino   E. Asian/Pacific Islander F. Other (Specify)_____

5. Describe your home community.

   A. Urban   B. Suburban   C. Middle to Small Town   D. Rural

6. How would you classify your political affiliation?

   A. Republican   B. Democrat   C. Independent
   D. Green Party   E. Other(Please Specify)_____

7. Were you, at any time during your childhood, raised in a single parent home?

   A. Yes   B. No

8. Are your parents:

   A. Married   B. Single/Never Been Married   C. Divorced   D. Widowed

9. Please describe your family's socioeconomic background.

    A. Upper Class (more than $175,000 annual family income)
    B. Upper Middle Class ($125,000 to $175,000 annual family income)
    C. Middle Class ($70,000 to $124,000 annual family income)
    D. Lower Middle Class ($69,000 to $30,000 annual family income)
    E. Lower/Working Class (less than $30,000)

10. Please describe your parents' level of educational attainment.

    Mother : A. Non-High School Graduate   B. High School Graduate

    C. College Graduate   D. Graduate/Professional Degree (M.A., J.D., etc.)

    E. Unsure

    Father : A. Non-High School Graduate   B. High School Graduate

    C. College Graduate   D. Graduate/Professional Degree (M.A., J.D., etc.)

    E. Unsure

11. How did you learn about this program?

    A. Word of Mouth   B. Recruiters   C. Websites

    D. Flyers, posters, or other forms of advertisement   E. Other (Specify)_____

---

12. Have you had any prior experience being a mentor?

    A. Yes   B. No

13. Did you have any preferences about your little? (such as race, class, or gender)

    A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

14. What inspired you to become a mentor?

15. What kinds of outcomes, positive or negative, have you gained through this experience of   being a mentor?

16. Once the match was made, how often did you meet with your little?

   A. Very Often (Every Week)   B. Often (A Couple of Times a Month)

   C. Seldom (Once a month)   D. Almost Never (A couple of times each semester)

17. Would you say that your meetings with your little were

   A. Consistent   B. Sporadic

18. Did you see any changes in your little during the mentorship process?

   A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

_____

19. Do you feel that you taught your little any valuable or important life skills?

   A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

_____

20. Please describe what activities you and your little were involved in and how you feel these activities helped your little.

21. Please describe any accomplishments your little achieved due to this relationship.

22. Were there any issues or problems that came up between you and your little during the mentoring process?

     A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

_____

23. Do you feel that you and your little formed a bond?

     A. Yes   B. No

24. Do you feel that you were qualified to become a mentor?

     A. Yes --- Why?_____

_____

     B. No ----Why Not?

_____

_____

25. Was there any type of training involved before you began working with your little?

     A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

_____

26. Do you feel that more training would have better prepared you for your duties as a mentor?

     A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

_____

27. How well did you relate to your little?

     A. Very well   B. Somewhat   C. Very Little   D. Not at all

28. Was it easy for you to relate to your little's lifestyle, culture, economic background, etc..?

     A. Yes   B. No   Please Explain _____

_____

29. If any, what kinds of barriers did you face in this mentoring relationship?

30. What factors or personal characteristics do you feel helped you to be an effective mentor?

31.Before you met your little, did you have any preconceptions about he/she would be like?

     A. Yes   B. No   If so what were they? _____

_____

32. What is your perception of youth that have been labeled at-risk?

33. Before you began working with this program, how much experience did you have with children considered at-risk ?

      A. A great deal   B. Some   C. Very Little   D. None at all

34. What things did you like about your little?

35. What things didn't you like about your little?

36. What factors do you feel could have made you a better mentor?

37. Do you feel that your little has benefited from knowing you and that you have had a positive impact on your little's life?

      A. Yes B. No   If so how?_____

38. Please comment on the quality of this mentoring program's organization and design.

    A. Excellent   B. Good   C. Average   D. Poor

39. What recommendations or suggestions can you offer that could make this program better?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Mentor Interview Questions

1. State your name, occupation, or if students year and major, and where you are from.
2. How did you learn about this program?
3. Could you briefly describe for me your impression of this program? (how it's run, is it well organized, etc.).
4. Would you recommend to any of your friends that they become involved in this program or others like it? Why or why not?
5. What's your impression of your little?
6. What population or kinds of students do you understand what students this program and other like to seek to serve?
7. How well do you relate to your little?
8. Have you had any prior experience being a mentor? Explain.
9. What inspired you to get involved in this program?
10. Do you feel that you and your little formed a bond? Explain.
11. What are some of the things that you and your little did/discussed together?
12. In your opinion do you think that your little needed this program, that he/she needed a mentor?
13. Before you met your little, did you have any preconceptions about what he/she would be like?
14. Did you have any preferences concerning your little?
15. What kinds of qualities do you think a mentor should have?
16. If you were a parent would you want your child involved in a program like this?
17. What's your perception of youth considered at-risk?
18. Had you, before this program, had much experience with youth considered at-risk?
19. Would you have liked to have more interaction/contact with your little's parents and family?
20. Do you feel that this lack of interaction w/your littles family and community put you at an advantage or disadvantage?
21. Do you plan to continue working w/your little during the next academic year?
22. What things could have made you a better mentor?
23. How committed have you been to this program and your littles?
24. What problems, if any, did you encounter w/the program and/or your little?
25. Do you think your little has benefited from this program and from knowing you?
26. When you hear the word mentor what comes to mind?
27. When you hear the term at-risk youth what pictures pops in your mind? What does the child look like?
28. Do you have any suggestions that would help improve this program?
29. Do you feel that perhaps more training would have been beneficial to you?

Teacher/Staff Interview Questions

1. Could you please state your name and occupation?
2. Could you briefly describe for me your impression of the BBBS school-based mentoring program?
3. From your understanding what kinds of students does this program seek to serve?
4. How many students from your class are involved in this program?
5. Do you feel that these students needed the program?
6. Has being involved in this program made any differences in the students? If so what kinds?
7. Are there other students in your class that you feel would benefit from the program?
8. From what you could tell did the students get along well with their mentors? Did they form a bond?
9. What kinds of qualities do you think a mentor should have?
10. When you hear the word "mentor" what usually comes to mind?
11. What's your perception of youth considered at-risk? More specifically when you hear the term at-risk youth who do you picture? What's your mental image?
12. Do you feel that the mentors should have had more interaction with the students' families and communities?
13. How committed do you feel the mentors were to this program?
14. Do you feel that programs like this are needed? Why?
15. What's the most important quality or characteristic you feel a mentor should have?
16. Do you feel that race matters when it comes to mentoring? *i.e.* do you feel that a black child should be mentored by a black volunteer?
17. What are some suggestions that you would make to help improve this program?

Program Organizer (BBBS) Interview Questions

1. Could you please state your name and occupation?
2. Could you briefly describe for me your impression of the BBBS school-based mentoring program?
3. From your understanding what kinds of students does this program seek to serve?
4. How many students from your class are involved in this program?
5. Do you feel that these students needed the program?
6. Has being involved in this program made any differences in the students? If so what kinds?
7. Are there other students in your class that you feel would benefit from the program?
8. From what you could tell did the students get along well with their mentors? Did they form a bond?
9. What kinds of qualities do you think a mentor should have?
10. When you hear the word "mentor" what usually comes to mind?
11. What's your perception of youth considered at-risk? More specifically when you hear the term at-risk youth who do you picture? What's your mental image?
12. Do you feel that the mentors should have had more interaction with the students' families and communities?
13. How committed do you feel the mentors were to this program?
14. Do you feel that programs like this are needed? Why?
15. What's the most important quality or characteristic you feel a mentor should have?
16. Do you feel that race matters when it comes to mentoring? *i.e.* do you feel that a black child should be mentored by a black volunteer?
17. Is there a certain kind of model, that you look for when you're looking for mentors? Is there an "ideal type" of person that you prefer as volunteers?
18. What is the background of most of the volunteers in the school-based program? *i.e.* race, gender, class, occupation, etc.
19. Why do you feel that more people of color do not volunteer to be mentors with the program?
20. Do you think that the program in some way perpetuates this phenomenon?
21. What are some things that you feel can be done to reach out more to the community for volunteers?
22. What are some suggestions that you would make to help improve this program?

Mentee Interview Questions

1. Tell me some of the things that you and your big brother/sister did together?
2. Did you like spending time with your big brother/sister?
3. Were you proud to have a big brother/sister?
4. What did your friends think about you having a big brother/sister?
5. What are some of the things that you liked most about your big brother/sister?
6. What was your favorite thing to do with your big brother/sister?
7. How did you feel on the days when you couldn't see your big brother/sister?
8. How did you feel on the days when your big brother/sister didn't come to see you?
9. Does your mommy know that you have a big brother/sister?
10. Has your mommy ever met your big brother/sister?
11. Would you like to do things with your big brother/sister outside of school?
12. Do you want to have a big brother/sister next year?
13. Will you have the same big brother/sister next year?
14. Do you want to have the same big brother/sister next year?
15. Do you miss your big brother/sister?

Interview Questions for University Administrator

1. Can you describe for me the nature of the relationship between the University of Illinois and the Champaign-Urbana community?
2. In light of this relationship, is it wise to have so many volunteers in the program who are University Students?
3. Are there ways to include the community in this mentoring initiative?
4. What can community members offer youth in this community"
5. Is it a good idea to incorporate the more?

VITA

Kashelia BriAnne Jackson was born in Oxford, MS on December 3, 1975. She was raised in Senatobia, MS by her parents James A. and Effie Jackson. She graduated from Senatobia Jr./Sr. High School a year early in May of 1993. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, MS in May of 1997 with a B.A. in English. From there she went on to earn her M.A. in English from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL in December of 1998. In January of 1999, she began the doctoral program in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While working on her Ph.D., Kashelia was afforded several teaching and administrative opportunities at the University and in the Champaign-Urbana community. Upon the receipt of her Ph.D. in May of 2003, it is her goal to begin work at one of the nations' institutions of higher learning.