

PPV

**Building
Relationships
With Youth in
Program Settings**

A Study of
Big Brothers/
Big Sisters

Kristine V. Morrow
Melanie B. Styles

May 1995

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) relationships was funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Commonwealth Fund and an anonymous donor. We wish to thank them for their generous support.

Alvia Branch and Jean Grossman guided and supervised this study, providing invaluable support throughout the many tasks involved in a research effort of this scope. Without them, and a full complement of Public/Private Ventures staff, this project could not, in fact, have been completed. Peter Anderson, Anabelle Aportela, Jeanine Ford, Colin Rajah and Pat Ma participated in data collection. Annick Barker, Julie Rainbow and Jeanine Ford contributed extensively to the data analysis with considerable care and insight. Reviewers Michelle Gambone, Natalie Jaffe, Phoebe Roaf, Michael Sack, Joseph Tierney, Gary Walker and Jean Grossman, in particular, provided thoughtful critique and contributed considerable clarity and insight to this text.

We wish especially to thank P/PV's MIS and support staff: Carol Dash--for her painstaking word processing of the document's multiple drafts, her willing participation in extensive data processing and entry, and continual "pitching in"--deserves our special thanks. The word processing of this document was ably assisted by Audrey Walmsley. Susan Tomko transcribed all of the interviews; Rhodie Bruce-Holly, Eleanor Hammond, Batia Trietsch and Nancy Resch contributed to the processing and analysis of this project's extensive data set; and Michael Callaghan (copy editing), Carol Eresian (proofreading) and Maxine Sherman (word processing) completed the report for production.

The project further benefitted from the wisdom of P/PV's Adult/Youth Relationships advisory board members: Richard Danzig of Latham & Watkins, Ron Ferguson of Harvard University, Frank Furstenberg of the University of Pennsylvania, Beatrix Hamburg of Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Harold Howe of Harvard University, Joan Schine of the Early Adolescent Helper program, Heather Weiss of Harvard University, and Emmy Werner of the University of California-Davis.

We wish also to thank the staff, volunteers and young people of the eight BB/BS agencies who participated in the research, and Tom McKenna and Dagmar McGill, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America's (BB/BSA) national executive director and deputy national executive director, respectively. Staff from the eight agencies gave generously of scarce time to schedule interviews, track participants and share their experiences and perceptions with us. Finally, we express special appreciation for the considerable candor and warmth of the adult volunteers and youth we interviewed. Our deepest wish is that this project proves beneficial for them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public/Private Ventures' (P/PV) research on Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) program practices--and on other mentoring programs involving college students, elders, middle school students, and youth in juvenile justice institutions--identifies a major challenge to these programs: ensuring that matched adults and youth meet long enough and often enough to offer even the possibility of establishing a relationship that could generate the life changes that mentoring programs seek to achieve. However, little is known about what helps these relationships to form, what they are like when they do form and why they break up. Understanding these mentoring relationships and their dynamics is the purpose of this study, *Building Relationships with Youth in Program Settings: A Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*, which was made possible by support from Lilly Endowment, Inc., The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Commonwealth Fund and an anonymous donor.

P/PV's earlier mentoring research (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Tierney and Branch, 1992; Furano, Roaf, Styles and Branch, 1993; and Styles and Morrow, 1992) showed that among the programmatically initiated relationships we examined, from one-fourth to two-thirds formed sustained relationships, based on the frequency and longevity of their meetings. In Styles and Morrow (1992), we took our first closer look at the relationships themselves. The 26 matches we examined in that study were between individuals 55 years old or older and at-risk youth. We found that in the relationships satisfying to both parties (two-thirds of the matches), the adults were more likely to have given the youth time to lower their defenses and develop trust in the mentors, while youth, in turn, were more likely to view their mentor as a valued source of support--in lives where positive adult support was frequently scarce.

The goal of the current study was to refine our understanding of these programmatically facilitated relationships in ways that could provide guidance to programs and mentors. We asked: Do our earlier findings hold when matches consist of youth and volunteers drawn from the more general population? Can we refine our classification of mentoring relationships beyond "satisfying" and "nonsatisfying"? Are there distinguishable expectations, behaviors or interactions associated with different types of relationships, and do they change over time?

We answer these questions by examining in detail the 82 matches made and supervised by eight BB/BS agencies over a nine-month period. The agencies represent a variety of program types in the BB/BSA network: two serve only one gender; some have medium-size case-loads, some very large ones; some provide extensive training and supervision, others less. The Little Brothers and Little Sisters involved range in age from 10 to 15 (average age is 12); the adult volunteers range from 21 to 57 (average age is 32).

Since we wanted to study matches that would be most likely to reveal the characteristics of BB/BS relationships and how they change over time, we chose matches that had been meeting for not less than four months (the point at which our earlier research indicates most "paper"

matches start to become real) and not more than 18 months at the time of the first interview. The longer-term relationships were chosen to illustrate how matches mature over their second year of life. The average length of match when the participants were first interviewed was one year. The second interview was conducted about nine months later.

MAJOR TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

We found that the relationships sorted themselves into two broad categories, which we labeled **prescriptive** and **developmental**.

Developmental relationships are defined as those in which the adult volunteers held expectations that varied over time in relation to their perception of the needs of the youth. In the beginning of developmental relationships, the volunteers devoted themselves to establishing a strong connection with the youth. It was only after the relationship solidified and the youth's receptivity was established that some of these volunteers started to address other goals, such as strengthening the youth's good habits. While most developmental volunteers ultimately hoped to help their youth improve in school and be more responsible, they centered their involvement and expectations on developing a reliable, trusting relationship, and expanded the scope of their efforts only as the relationship strengthened.

These volunteers, further, placed a high value on keeping the relationship going and enjoyable, both to ensure that it lasted long enough to offer the possibility of helping the youth and to provide youth with a variety of experiences or opportunities for simple fun that are often missing in their lives. Further, sensitive to the youth's satisfaction with the relationship, developmental volunteers incorporated the youth into the decision-making process with regard to both what the two did together and what they talked about. Thus, these volunteers were willing to adjust their plans--both for daily activities and for achieving overall relationship goals--to include the youth's preferences.

Both adults and youth in developmental relationships demonstrated attachment to their partner and reported a strong sense of commitment and desire to continue their match. Developmental volunteers felt satisfied with their youth's and relationship's progress--and when doubts arose, they were more likely to consult caseworkers for reassurance or advice. Youth in developmental relationships reported feeling a considerable sense of support from their adult friend--believing that their partner would be there for them in time of need, to listen or offer assistance. Developmental adults' practices of allowing the youth to "talk about anything," family issues in particular, without fear of judgment or reproach; reassuring youth of their availability when difficulties arose; and "just listening"--all these were perceived by youth as effective in helping to resolve or cope with difficulties. Such support, described consistently by youth in developmental matches, closely approximates the type of support most research on youth development concludes is key to healthy adolescent development (Werner and Smith, 1992; Connell, 1990; Scales, 1991; Cowen and Work, 1988; Rutter, 1987; Sandler, Miller, Short and Wolchick, 1989; Garmezny, 1985).

Prescriptive relationships, on the other hand, are defined as those in which the adult volunteers viewed as primary their goals for the match rather than the youth's. Adults in these relationships set the goals, the pace and/or the ground rules for the relationship. These volunteers were reluctant to adjust their expectations of the youth or their expectation of how quickly the youth's behavior could change.

There are two major subcategories of prescriptive relationships. In the first and larger subgroup, volunteers approached the match by setting goals (typically improving school performance) and focusing shared time--in conversation particularly--on achieving those goals. These volunteers often focused on admirable goals but had unrealistic expectations of how they could be achieved. These mentors believed that their efforts could transform youth's values, habits, skills or accomplishments within a year or, at the most, two.

In the second subgroup of prescriptive relationships, the adults required the youth to take equal responsibility for maintaining the relationship and providing feedback about its meaning. In this way, the adult set the basic ground rules of the relationship beyond the capacity of most early adolescents.

Both subgroups of prescriptive volunteers resisted modifying their high expectations and ultimately felt frustrated. The youth were similarly frustrated, unsatisfied with the relationship, and not, surprisingly, far less likely to regard their partner as a source of consistent support.

While two-thirds of the 82 relationships examined for this study were developmental, one cannot generalize this proportion to all matches made by BB/BS agencies. Several important types of BB/BS relationships were not included in this study: those that had lasted longer than one and a half years, which were therefore fairly stable and unlikely to change over time (these matches are likely heavily weighted toward developmental relationships); and those involving children under the age of 10. The sample was drawn so that we could carefully examine how relationships develop, not to provide an estimate of how many relationships were meaningful. Thus, it would be incorrect to draw any conclusions here about the frequency of developmental relationships among BB/BS matches in general. This study was not designed to address that question.

HOW THE RELATIONSHIPS CHANGED OVER TIME

Developmental and prescriptive volunteers commenced their relationships with distinct views of the BB/BSA intervention and its underlying purpose. Prescriptive volunteers believed that the primary purpose of their involvement was to guide the youth toward embracing values, attitudes and behaviors the adults defined as positive. Developmental volunteers believed their main purpose was to provide opportunities and supports the youth did not currently have.

Given these different understandings of the underlying philosophy of BB/BSA (which is "be a friend"), the initial goals for the matches were different for the two types of volunteers. The early goals of developmental volunteers centered on relationship-building and providing the youth with the type of support conveyed by the mentor's consistent presence. The early goals of the most prescriptive volunteers centered on transforming the youth--either improving school performance or behavior, or getting the youth to take more responsibility. While prescriptive volunteers realized they had to spend time establishing a relationship, their transformative goals were never far from the surface and became apparent to the youth fairly early on in the match.

Over time, the importance of transformative goals increased somewhat in the developmental relationships. After spending the time needed to establish trust and partnership with the youth, many of the youth in developmental relationships demonstrated a pattern of independent help-seeking and voluntarily divulged difficulties in their school or personal lives, allowing the volunteer to provide guidance and advice.

The goal of prescriptive volunteers--achieving change in the youth--remained the same over time. As prescriptive relationships developed, many demonstrated growing tension, with the youth exhibiting self-shielding behaviors, such as avoiding problem topics. This tension, in part, led to the demise of many of the prescriptive relationships. By the time of the second interview (nine months after the first), two-thirds of the prescriptive matches no longer met, while only about 10 percent of the developmental relationships had ended; and throughout the relationships' course, only about 30 percent of the surviving prescriptive pairs met regularly. In contrast, more than 90 percent of the developmental pairs met regularly at that time.

Thus, in the end, it was volunteers who took a slower, more developmental approach to their mentoring relationships who were more likely to meet mentoring's major challenge: to make the relationship last long enough to be helpful to the youth.

WHAT THE PAIRS DID TOGETHER

What the youth and adults did and talked about was fairly similar across developmental and prescriptive pairs. They played sports and games, walked to places of recreation, ate out and just "hung out." They talked about school, peers and families. However, the process by which activities and topics were selected differed greatly for developmental and prescriptive matches.

Developmental volunteers, to a much greater extent than prescriptive ones, considered the youth's enjoyment important in breaking the monotony or stress of homes strapped for resources. Providing the youth with opportunities for fun was, in fact, a mainstay of developmental relationships. That such opportunities were important to a long-lasting relationship is not unique to the BB/BS context; this has previously been found in P/PV's mentoring studies, especially those whose youth populations and program structures most closely resemble BB/BSA (Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992). Prescriptive volunteers also

provided for youth's fun--particularly during the relationships' early, building periods. But overall, these volunteers were far less convinced of fun's intrinsic benefits and, thus, were more likely to push "good for you" activities (without considering the youth's preferences or time frame) or to offer fun as a reward for "good behavior."

An equally important distinction between developmental and prescriptive matches was the process that partners used in deciding activities. Developmental volunteers spent more time negotiating with their Little Brother or Little Sister, making it more likely that the chosen activities would be mutually enjoyable, and that the youth would perceive his or her preferences as important to the decision, thus feeling like a full partner in the relationship. Sharing enjoyable activities with a caring adult appeared to impart to youth a sense of worth and of being cared for--a type of self-knowledge that youth-focused scholars agree is vital to healthy youth development.

Negotiation also allowed the adults to move youth, with their consent, beyond a singular focus on fun to intermittent participation in work- or education-oriented activities. However, when volunteers pushed youth in this direction, ignoring their preferences or requests--as prescriptive volunteers were more likely to do--the youth was left feeling mistrustful of the adult and disappointed in the relationship. These volunteers equally felt frustrated with both the youth's resistance and the progress of the relationship.

The patterns of communication between the adult and the youth also differed in developmental and prescriptive matches, again not so much in the "what" as the "how." Prescriptive volunteers seemed to feel that their principal goal of changing the youth could be met by clearly stating expectations and expressing disappointment when they were not met. In these matches, conversations were more frequently lectures, with adults pointing out the youth's mistakes from the beginning of the relationship to the end.

Because the initial goal of most developmental volunteers was to establish a friendship--one that crossed gaps in age and provided a bridge for the development of trust--these volunteers were much more likely to comment on youth's mistakes sparingly and to strive to neither convey judgment nor jeopardize the youth's trust. As the developmental relationships matured, the adults provided more advice, but focused it on identifying solutions and remained open to other topics of conversation.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

The majority of BB/BS matches involve youth from single-parent homes. Since the missing parent is almost always the father, Big Brothers and Big Sisters represent potentially different types of support to the youth. If successful, a Big Brother can fill the role of a missing same-sex adult model, while a Big Sister is a supplemental same-sex adult model. Given these inherent differences, one might suspect Big Brother relationships to differ qualitatively from Big Sister relationships. In fact, although based on a very small sample of matches, we did find differences.

Male matches in our sample were more likely than the female matches to have developmental relationships. This could be due to a number of factors. First, boys are much more likely to be referred to the program through a parent solely because the child lacks an adult male role model. Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to be referred through a school or third party because of behavioral problems. Thus, Little Sisters might be coming to the match with more needs and problems.

Second, women are more likely to use frequency of disclosure as a measure of a good relationship, whereas men are more likely to value mutually enjoyable activity. Thus, Big Sisters in both developmental and prescriptive relationships were more likely than Big Brothers to be frustrated by the lack of verbal feedback they received from their partner. While developmental Big Sisters were able to resolve their frustration with this lack of feedback through caseworker intervention and/or by adjusting their expectations, most prescriptive Big Sisters were not.

Third, since it emphasizes activities over talk, it is conceivable that the BB/BSA model is particularly conducive to male relationships. This emphasis may have sustained many of the male matches through the early periods when the relationships were maturing.

While the classification scheme was not fully developed before this study, our earlier investigations into the types of mentoring relationships in other programs indicate that female pairs were generally more satisfied with their relationships than were male pairs. It is unclear why this differential was not found in this BB/BSA study. It could be because most BB/BS youth lacked custodial fathers, and thus the mentor filled different needs for girls and boys. But further investigation with a much larger and representative sample of participants is necessary to answer this question.

CROSS-RACE MATCHES

Many minority youth are waiting for minority volunteers to come forward. Cross-race matches have been a partial answer to the long waits many minority youth experience. Although our cross-race sample is small (26), we felt it was important to at least begin to examine the quality of cross-race matches. The reader is cautioned, however, that our findings from this small sample should be viewed as suggestive only.

We found that the cross-race matches we examined were about equally likely to be developmental as were same-race matches. Although they faced challenges particular to bridging the social distance created by ethnic differences, cross-race matches were adept at handling these differences by focusing on the program model--the volunteer provided the child with an outlet for fun, developed a friendship and avoided "deeper" issues that might have made them and/or the child uncomfortable.

PRACTICES THAT MAY ENCOURAGE THE FORMATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

The BB/BSA program model appears to provide a fertile medium for the growth of mutually satisfying, regularly meeting and long-lasting relationships between a relatively wide range of unrelated adults and a broad set of youth. The pairs in developmental relationships were typically more satisfied and met with greater regularity than did prescriptive matches. Developmental relationships also lasted longer than prescriptive relationships.

Most of the credit for these comparatively sturdy relationships rests with the patience, commitment and understanding of the volunteers; however BB/BSA program practices and structure helped determine the nature of the interactions. Volunteers who had been able to establish developmental relationships were those who adhered more closely to the standard BB/BSA model, which stresses friendship. We believe lessons for other mentoring programs can be drawn from this finding.

While this study did not rigorously test the degree to which BB/BS practices were responsible for the development of good relationships, the commonalities we observed among the developmental relationships lead us to believe that strong program practices encouraging developmental behavior could increase the percentage of these relationships. The recommendations are based on our cumulative knowledge of mentoring relationships begun in Styles and Morrow (1992) and expanded and refined here.

Early Program Information and Screening

Volunteers' initial understanding of program goals shaped the way in which they interacted with youth and, in turn, the type of relationships that formed. Programs have several vehicles through which they can influence this understanding. The two most obvious are the initial information given to potential volunteers about the program and its orientation sessions.

The principal goal for developmental volunteers was providing the youth with opportunities they did not currently have. Sharing enjoyable activities with their youth was one of the most important features of these relationships, as was letting the youth have some say in the choice of activity. Thus, when describing themselves, mentoring programs should stress to volunteers that sharing fun and being a reliable presence for youth are, in and of themselves, valued goals of the program. Volunteers should perceive the program primarily as a way of providing needed companionship, rather than a means for helping a youth succeed in life. Programs might also wish to explore more fully during the screening process what the potential volunteers believe their involvement with a youth will accomplish. Programs may wish to screen out volunteers who wish quickly to improve the youth's behavior, provide these volunteers with extra training and supervision, or refer them to a program that uses volunteers for, say, tutoring or training in a skill.

Training

Many of the adults who volunteer for mentoring programs have relatively little idea of where the youth are developmentally, or how best to interact with them. And yet the tone of a relationship can be quickly set at the beginning. Thus, it seems important to provide volunteers with prematch guidance. Although BB/BSA does not require volunteer training, many sites provide it, and volunteers in this study who did receive such training seemed to value it.

This report suggests that perhaps the most important lessons that training should attempt to teach mentors are that building a relationship cannot be rushed, and that any attempts to effect behavioral change will not be very effective unless there is a solid relationship between the adult and youth, and the youth is receptive to the adult's input. Volunteers who push too quickly to change behaviors they do not like in the youth are likely to jeopardize the relationship and unlikely to effect change.

Specific areas of training that are likely to be useful include teaching volunteers what difficulties they might expect over the course of the relationship and how to deal with them. Future mentors should come to understand the importance of their early interactions. While they do not articulate it, youth often use this period to test the volunteer and see what the volunteer is like. Thus, besides discussing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative styles of interaction, training could also cover how to interpret and cope with common frustrating experiences with youth, such as reluctance to talk, missed appointments, unanswered phone calls and exaggerated demands.

Providing the adults with skills and techniques to deal appropriately with these frustrations would also be useful. For example, it is important from the beginning of the relationship to try to involve youth in decisions about what to do. Considering the youth's preferences, however, did not mean always doing what the youth wanted, but rather discussing and negotiating until an activity that was satisfactory to both parties was determined. Thus, as many BB/BS agencies realize, volunteer training in negotiating skills and appropriate limit-setting can be beneficial.

Some BB/BS agencies also provide training in active listening. Often, youth just wanted someone to listen to their problems, and valued volunteers who listened without proffering immediate or extensive advice. Active listening skills helped volunteers identify their youth's needs, and conveyed to the youth that the adult was caring and attentive.

Supervision

The regular supervision provided for in the BB/BSA model (at first monthly, then quarterly) gives adults the feedback they may need to keep them working productively at the relationship. Although training can provide volunteers with an understanding of youth in general and give the adults guidance, the impact of initial training will be lost over time. While ongoing training could mitigate this loss, caseworkers can reinforce training's lessons and help volun-

teers adapt them to particular situations. Case managers can help the volunteers understand the meaning of a youth's behavior, provide the adult with reassurance and help volunteers cope with the youth's developmental limitations.

This type of support for the volunteer is especially important early in a match. Even volunteers who understand that building a relationship with an unrelated youth can take a long time can become frustrated by the apparent lack of response most youth show their mentors early in the match. Caseworkers can help volunteers get through the initial and subsequent stages.

Ongoing supervision can also help volunteers curb their desire to correct what they define as undesirable behavior. Volunteers in developmental relationships did not try to pursue other goals, such as improving school performance or having the youth be more responsible, before a good relationship was worked out--often many months into the match. Even after that, they never let such goals swamp the primary goal of providing the youth with a consistent, supportive adult friend.

CONCLUSION

It remains to be seen whether developmental mentoring relationships can produce real changes in the lives of youth, such as improved grades and more positive behavior. Based on this study and our other investigations, we are impressed with the potential that well-run mentoring programs have in building constructive relationships between unrelated adults and youth. However, the youth policy field is full of examples of well-run interventions that have no long-term effects on the lives of youth (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). The results from our coming impact study of BB/BSA will speak to the question of how mentoring affects the lives of youth.

In the meantime, these observations of how relationships develop provide an important basis for identifying relationship practices that promote both BB/BS matches and, more broadly, programmatically created relationships that meet some of the support needs of at-risk youth. In the same vein, our identification of what makes prescriptive matches offers insights into relationship practices that are less supportive for at-risk youth.

Given the benefits research shows that youth derive from caring and consistent relationships with adults, and the scarcity of such relationships in the lives of many youth, there is significant need for interventions like mentoring. We believe that well-implemented programmatic relationships designed to address this need play an important role in any broader strategy designed to serve the needs of youth, especially youth in high-risk environments.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of supportive relationships in the lives of both adults and youth has been well documented. Research indicates that supportive interactions can enhance an individual's ability to cope with a variety of transitions and adversities (Gottlieb, 1988). Social support--defined as information and interactions that lead the subject to believe that he or she is cared for and loved; is esteemed and valued; and belongs to a network involving mutual understanding (Cobb, 1976)--has been identified as important protection against the psychological and health consequences of stress (Hobfoll, 1985; Unger and Wandersman, 1980). Theorists posit that social support acts as a protective resource in several ways: by increasing individuals' confidence in their ability to handle stressful or threatening situations (Cohen and Syme, 1985); by promoting psychological adjustment, well-being and an improved sense of self (Wilcox and Vernberg, 1985; Unger and Wandersman, 1980); and, for youth in particular, by providing an emotional sense of "felt security" (Sandler, Miller, Short and Wolchick, 1989; Bretherton, 1985).

Researchers believe that supportive relationships with adults can promote youth's healthy development during adolescence--in fact, they link such relationships with adolescents' self-esteem, self-concept and sense of self-competence (Haensly and Parsons, 1993; Scales, 1991; Tietjen, 1989; Hirsch and Reischl, 1985). From their review of the literature, Schonert-Reichl and Offer (1992) concluded that the level of support perceived by adolescents is inextricably linked to their feelings of self-worth. And, Harter (1990) has shown that for students making the transition from elementary school (6th grade) to junior high school (7th grade), self-esteem is predicted in part by changes students report in the degree of social support they received.

Further, a growing body of research on youth who live in environments that place them at risk suggests that supportive relationships with unrelated adults can mitigate adversities' negative effects on youth development (Furstenberg, 1993; Werner and Smith, 1992; Rutter, 1987; Cowen and Work, 1988; Garmezzy, 1985; Werner and Smith, 1982). Unfortunately, researchers also note that at-risk youth increasingly come of age in what has been described as a "crisis of disconnectedness" (Chaskin and Hawley, 1994), where poor and minority youth are disproportionately isolated from the kind of consistent adult nurturance and guidance that is both key to the healthy development of all youth and particularly crucial to safeguarding those at risk from the many dangers that lace impoverished communities (Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Wilson, 1987).

In recent years, mentoring programs that pair adult volunteers with young people have gained popularity as a means of providing youth with supportive relationships. It has been hypothesized that a mentoring relationship can help a teenager realistically appraise life options, develop a sense of self-esteem and competence through the mastery of life skills, and--through the provision of nurturance, encouragement and guidance--reduce the likelihood that youth deemed "at risk" will engage in multiple problem behaviors, such as substance abuse,

having unprotected sex, engaging in criminal activity or failing in school (Carnegie Corporation, 1989).

At the same time, mentoring programs often underestimate the complexities inherent in developing these relationships and the difficulties particular to the artificial nature of pairing adult volunteers with youth. The young people in these programs typically do not pick their mentors but are assigned adults who are distant in age, often unknown to the young person or his/her family, and, in many cases, from a different socioeconomic or cultural background (Styles and Morrow, 1992). While researchers have expended considerable energy attempting to understand and define the dynamics of naturally occurring relationships (i.e., parent/child relationships, friendships, intimate relationships), programmatically created relationships have remained largely unexplored. Consequently, information to assist programmers and policy-makers in conceptualizing these relationships and their benefits, to guide volunteers in creating meaningful relationships with youth, or to aid practitioners in facilitating positive and meaningful relationships is relatively rare.

Further, despite a widely held and rarely contested belief among researchers that support is crucial to the psychosocial development of youth, precisely how such support is conveyed remains unclear, and research strategies thought to reliably measure support are far from straightforward (Gottlieb, 1988). There is wide disagreement over basic definitions of support's primary components, the developmental needs it serves in youth, and the types of interactions or relationships through which it is best provided. In addition, research on youth from high-risk environments that could suggest areas of development that are appropriate to target with a support-based intervention has remained sketchy at best (Zaslow and Takanishi, 1993). Indeed, the widespread practice of applying research on subjects who are white and middle-class to extract information about the support needs of at-risk youth, more often minority and poor, has made it difficult to generalize measurement strategies and findings from much of this literature (Jessor, 1993; McLoyd, 1990).

Given these critical gaps in knowledge of programmatically created relationships, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) has designed a broad, multistudy mentoring research initiative that first seeks information about the essential nature and basic content of these relationships for young adolescents, then focuses on their potential to meet the support needs of those at risk. This multiyear initiative incorporates a range of program assessments into a uniform research agenda that systematically addresses questions of program implementation, volunteer availability and training, potential impact on youth, and the type and extent of programmatic support needed to create effective, enduring relationships.

P/PV'S BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS RESEARCH

With the evaluation of programs affiliated with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA), P/PV reaches the culmination of its Adult/Youth Relationships research initiative. BB/BSA is the largest and oldest organization dedicated to providing youth with caring, supportive adult relationships. The Big Brother/Big Sister model has been in use since 1902,

and there are currently more than 500 BB/BS local affiliates in 50 states, supervising thousands of youth in one-to-one relationships with adult volunteers.¹ Increasingly, BB/BS agencies have seen their primary population change from middle-class youth with one primary need--a male role model--to lower-income youth facing multiple needs and risk factors, including living in resource-deprived neighborhoods and/or being victims of physical or sexual abuse. With this shift, BB/BSA stands as one of the country's largest brokers of intervention-based relationships for at-risk youth (Furano, Roaf, Styles and Branch, 1993).

BB/BSA also stands well apart from other mentoring initiatives in the depth of its commitment to the programmatic support of relationships. BB/BSA's hallmark--caseworker supervision--in particular, represents the type of support that mentoring research indicates is crucial if matches made on paper are to translate into relationships that are meaningful to participants' lives. To date, our research confirms that programs with regular, dedicated supervision by a program coordinator produce matches that are more likely to meet and form meaningful bonds than are those programs with less structured or constant supervision (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992; Furano, Roaf, Styles and Branch, 1993). In contrast to newer mentoring initiatives, BB/BSA has developed and published its standards, and has established specific required procedures for screening, matching and supervising matches among its affiliates.

For these reasons, research on BB/BSA represents an excellent opportunity for P/PV to investigate questions pursued in earlier mentoring assessments of the range of impact on youth; the nature and effectiveness of relationships; and optimum program practices. In addition, our investigation of BB/BSA takes our knowledge of program-created relationships a step further by systematically addressing questions concerning the experience of particular groups of young people. The research conducted here begins to explore potential differences in relationships and their outcomes by gender and across cross-race and same-race matches. Further, by drawing on research conducted in P/PV's prior relationships studies--e.g., identification of key relationship variables--this research completes a process in which a set of valid and systematic adult/youth relationship measures are refined and finalized.

P/PV's investigation of the BB/BSA approach consists of four studies involving 15 Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies. Ultimately, this research tests the hypothesis that BB/BS relationships can facilitate positive adolescent development. However, in order for BB/BS relationships to effect positive developmental outcomes for youth (e.g., improved school performance, increased prosocial behavior), meaningful relationships must first develop. And for meaningful relationships to develop, interactions between the adult volunteer and the youth must take place. The four BB/BSA studies were designed to determine whether BB/BS matches do indeed meet, form meaningful relationships and effect positive outcomes, and to understand the role of the agency in that process.

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

Implementation Study. The first study, completed in 1993, documents how the BB/BSA program model is implemented and whether meetings take place between volunteers and youth--the first necessary condition for effecting outcomes. Through a survey of volunteers at eight agencies, we found that BB/BS matches have higher rates of meeting than matches in other programs P/PV has studied. We hypothesize that these high rates of interaction are, in part, a result of BB/BSA casework practices, which stipulate that at minimum, caseworkers must contact the parent, youth and volunteer within two weeks of the match, monthly during the first year of the match, and quarterly in subsequent years (Furano et al., 1993).

Volunteer Applicant Pool Study. The second study to be completed was designed to examine the process of recruiting and screening volunteers--a specific program practice that receives significant attention from BB/BS agencies. The study provides insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the screening process as well as the characteristics of adults who came forward to volunteer at eight BB/BS agencies during the study period (Roaf, Tierney and Hunt, 1994).

Relationship Formation Study. The third study to be completed, the focus of this report, examines the heart of the BB/BSA intervention--the relationship that forms between the volunteer and youth.

Impact Study. The fourth and largest study, to be completed in 1995, is designed to determine whether the youth who participate in BB/BS programs fare better than they would have had they not participated. Approximately 1,100 youth who requested the services of BB/BS were randomly assigned to one of two groups, with one group receiving a Big Brother or Big Sister, and the other remaining on the waiting list. Their responses on standardized measures are being compared both before and after treatment to determine the program's impact. In addition to measuring the benefits of participation (if any), the study will report youth's perceptions of their Big Brother or Big Sister and the relationship they have developed.

PURPOSE OF THE RELATIONSHIP FORMATION STUDY

Despite BB/BSA's eminence and long tenure in the youth-serving field, the relationship formation study is the first to specifically investigate the particular genre of adult/youth relationships that form under the BB/BSA model. Through the years, BB/BSA has amassed compelling anecdotes of adult volunteers helping to promote positive changes in young people's lives, yet there is no clear sense of the full range of relationships that form in the BB/BSA context, nor of how these can be characterized. It is not known whether the matches share the characteristics of naturally occurring relationships, as the term Big Brother or Big Sister seems to imply; whether individual BB/BS relationships differ in their ability to supply support to the youth; or whether BB/BS relationships differ significantly from those observed in similar programs.

This relationship formation study begins to address this deficit by identifying BB/BS relationship types and investigating their comparative effectiveness in meeting BB/BSA guidelines--i.e., in establishing consistent, lasting relationships that promote the pairs' commitment and

belief in the relationships' benefits, and supply support to the youth. Relationship types are identified through documentation of the roles pair members assume; the primary content of their activities and exchanges; the participants' perceptions of the relationship's meaning and benefits, particularly in supplying support to the youth; and, perhaps most crucially, the key interactive processes through which relationships develop, sustain or decline.

In addition, the relationship formation study examines four specific issues of longstanding interest to BB/BSA and the larger mentoring field. First, BB/BSA and other mentoring initiatives have long considered issues of gender in their programming. Previous research on mentoring offers little insight into gender-related issues: studies have rarely examined differences in the types or purposes of adult/youth relationships involving two females and those involving two males. Yet the vast majority of both boys and girls served by BB/BSA live in homes where a male role model is absent. Therefore, it is important to understand what distinguishes effective BB/BS relationships for girls, most of whom live with a same-sex role model, as distinct from boys, most of whom do not.

Second, cross-race matching has received great attention and sparked considerable debate in the mentoring field. P/PV's study of the implementation of the BB/BSA model (Furano et al., 1993) found that rates of interaction were similar for same- and cross-race matches. Yet, little is known about the inner workings of these matches--i.e., their characteristic content or interactions.

Third, BB/BS relationships do not exist in a vacuum, but are influenced by external factors--most notably, the youth's family and the BB/BS caseworker assigned to supervise the match. Given that another requirement of the BB/BSA model is that the child's parent express a commitment to support the match, it is possible that family involvement in BB/BS programs may differ from family involvement in mentoring programs where such a requirement does not exist.

Finally, no inquiry into the nature of adult/youth relationships that form under the BB/BSA rubric could be complete without consideration of the integral role played by caseworkers, who regularly monitor, supervise and make themselves available to every match. While prior mentoring research has demonstrated the importance of caseworker supervision to program-created relationships that both form and endure, little is known about the specifics of caseworker intervention or the content of other structured forms of support, such as orientation, training or annual review meetings.

To meet this broad-spectrum need for information on these issues, P/PV designed the BB/BS relationships research to address the following questions:

- What types of relationships form? What do the pairs do together? What do they talk about? What is the nature of the support provided to the youth?

- How do these BB/BS relationships develop and how do some sustain? How and why do others prematurely end?
- What relationship practices are associated with how effectively matches meet BB/BSA program requirements and provide support to the youth?
- How do specific program practices promote or hinder relationship development? What practices are necessary to promote relationship development?
- What constitutes effective relationships for girls served by BB/BSA, most of whom live with a same-sex parent, as compared with boys, most of whom do not?
- Do same-race and cross-race matches differ, and, if so, how?

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Given the broad scope of the questions, P/PV designed a qualitative study of BB/BS relationships. While quantitative research methods are best suited to surveying issues that are uniform and clearly defined across relatively large populations, qualitative methods are more appropriate where our knowledge of a subject is underdeveloped and inquiry that is in-depth and exploratory is warranted. Distinguished by their capacity to detect a diversity of experiences and to generate data that is detailed, qualitative methods thus fit well with this study's mandate to discriminate key BB/BS relationship types and define their central dynamics and key traits.

As is typical in qualitative research, the sample selected for the study was not drawn to achieve representativeness, nor to permit statistical analysis, but was instead designed to both allow in-depth examination and ensure diversity among the participants. Accordingly, this study of BB/BS relationships involves an unusually large sample for a qualitative study--82 relationships representing male, female, same-race and cross-race matches selected from eight different agencies.²

Employing such a large sample for this qualitative inquiry maximizes the opportunity to glean a detailed, contextualized portrait of a diversity of BB/BS matches and program approaches. However, as the following discussion illustrates, the sample is neither large enough nor designed in such a way that it can inform predictions about the percentage of BB/BS relationships at large that will likely fall into a particular relationship type. Rather, this study--and its sample--were designed so we could explore how BB/BS relationships for youth ages 10 to

² Agencies that participated in the relationship formation study are: BB/BS Association of Columbus and Franklin County, Inc.; BB/BS of Forsyth County, Inc.; BB&S of Houston; BB of Greater Indianapolis; BS of Central Indiana, Inc.; BB/BS of Jackson County, Inc.; BB/BS of Greater Minneapolis; and BB/BS Association of Philadelphia, Inc.

15 develop or fail to develop effectively, and to identify and provide insight into practices and factors associated with relationship growth or decline.

Agencies

As Table 1 indicates, the eight agencies selected for the sample represent a variety of BB/BSA program practices and philosophies. Their caseloads range from medium to large; two serve youth of one gender; and some have large numbers of cross-race matches. Training and supervision practices vary widely across agencies. Agencies also vary on the number of matches by race and gender, required meetings per month, and length of match commitment.

Study Sample

To select matches for participation, each study agency provided the researchers with a list of all their matches involving youth from age 10 to 15 that had been meeting for at least four months, but for no more than a year and a half.

Matches that terminated before four months were excluded because our previous research on BB/BS matches indicated that the majority of those that terminated before this point had never or had only occasionally met--and thus could provide little useful information about why jelled relationships falter or fail (Furano et al., 1993). Similarly, we excluded matches that had met for more than a year and a half, and were thus past the critical periods of relationship formation.

Thus, we were left with a list of matches that would allow us to fulfill the research mandate of closely examining the full range of BB/BS relationship types to illuminate key dynamics in relationship development--and that included a certain amount of matches whose duration had already gone beyond the expected program commitment of one year.

Sample matches were then randomly selected; however, we stratified the sample to include roughly equal numbers of male and female matches, and to secure adequate numbers of same-race and cross-race matches--the latter typically involving a white volunteer and a black youth. This sampling technique allowed us to perform analysis of the key variables of race and gender.

Table 2 provides demographic information on the sample of youth and volunteers selected to participate in this study. Little Brothers and Little Sisters ranged in age from 10 to 15, with the average age being 12. Big Brothers and Big Sisters ranged in age from 21 to 57, with the average age being 32. These numbers closely coincide with national figures, which show that the average age of volunteers is 32 and the average age of youth participating in the program is 12.1. However, the matches studied overrepresent the number of cross-race matches that participate nationally. Thirty-two percent of matches (26 of 82) in our sample were cross-race, while for BB/BSA as a whole, 20.2 percent are cross-race. Table 3 presents matches in

Table 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON STUDY SITES^a

	AGENCY							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Total Number of Matches	763	479	281	767	430	148	733	465
Number of Little Brothers Matched	341	237	148	767	N/A	49	486	179
Number of Little Sisters Matched	422	242	133	N/A	430	99	247	286
Percentage of Minority Youth	39%	54%	68%	43%	41%	16%	70%	46%
Percentage of Cross-Race Matches	28%	33%	40%	33%	20%	10%	30%	37%
Meetings/Month	3-4	4	4	2-4	2-4	4	4	4
Minimum Length of Match	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year
Initial Training	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Supervision for First Year	monthly	2.5 hours weekly for 1.5 months then monthly	2.5 hours monthly	monthly	2.5 hours monthly	3-4 hours weekly for 6 weeks then monthly	3 hours monthly	monthly

^a Data from 1992 program year.

Table 2**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS**

CHARACTERISTICS	NUMBER
Youth	
<u>Race</u>	
Black	41
White	36
Hispanic	4
Other	1
<u>Age</u>	
10-11	40
12-13	23
14-15	18
16	1
Average Age	12
<u>Gender</u>	
Male	43
Female	39
Volunteers Male/Female	
<u>Race</u>	
Black	20
White	62
Hispanic	0
Other	0
<u>Age</u>	
21-24	16
25-29	18
30-34	26
35-44	10
Over 45	12
Average Age	32
<u>Gender</u>	
Male	43
Female	39
Sample Size	82

Table 3

MATCHES BY RACE AND GENDER

RACE	GENDER		Total
	Male	Female	
<u>Same Race</u>			
White	18	18	36
Black	12	8	20
Subtotal	30	26	56
<u>Cross Race^a</u>			
Black	12	9	21
Hispanic	1	3	4
Other	0	1	1
Subtotal	13	13	26
Total	43	39	82

^a All adults in cross-race matches were white. Race refers to that of the youth.

this sample by gender and by whether they are same-race or cross-race matches. The 82 matches had been meeting for an average of one year at the time of their first interview.

Data Sources

To adequately capture the processes of relationship development or demise, semistructured, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants at two points in time. Because this study is intended to illuminate the content and dynamics of interactions characteristic of matches that mature into ongoing, mutually satisfying relationships and those that do not, we tried to interview participants a second time, whether their status was terminated, closing or ongoing.

For each round, two P/PV interviewers visited each agency to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants. Participation in the study was voluntary. Interviews were conducted over a four-day span. Youth and adults were interviewed separately. Almost all interviews were scheduled by agency staff, conducted in program offices and tape-recorded. Interviews with Big Brothers and Big Sisters lasted an average of 1.5 hours, while interviews with Little Brothers and Little Sisters lasted about 45 minutes. All interviews were then transcribed verbatim.

The initial interviews were designed to obtain a detailed profile of each match and thus tap the relationships' basic contents: frequency and length of meetings; behavior and activities during shared time; the content and nature of communication; the nature of pair members' interactions; and the participants' perceptions, attitudes and feelings toward their partners and the match. These interviews also explored early stages of relationship development.

The second interview occurred approximately nine months later, allowing the relationships time to progress, remain unchanged or dissolve. In addition to following up on the relationship's content and pair members' perceptions, questions asked in the second interview probed key processes of the relationship (such as negotiating roles) and measured key relationship variables (e.g., support for the youth, around which previous research indicated some programmatic relationships grow and develop, while others falter and decline).

In addition to conducting interviews, our data collection included a review of each pair's case files to obtain demographic information on the participants, and determine the nature and extent of communications between the agency and the volunteer, the youth and the youth's parent. Finally, whenever possible, agency trainings for volunteers were observed and agency staff were interviewed about program practices in general and issues that arise in supervising pairs in particular.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report documents the findings from these data collection efforts and presents a detailed examination of the primary types of BB/BS relationships that formed in this sample. Chapter

II describes the research processes through which BB/BS relationship types were defined and describes their key traits. Chapter III identifies key differences in BB/BS volunteers' approaches to working with the youth. Chapter IV describes how these approaches played out in interactions with youth, the pathways of relationship development characteristic of BB/BS matches in the sample, and the youth's responses to their relationships. Chapter V goes on to explore gender and ethnic differences, and examines the correspondence between these variables and different types of relationships; Chapters VI and VII examine external influences on a match, describing the role of the family and agency, respectively. Finally, Chapter VIII presents P/PV's conclusions and recommendations.

II. DEFINING BB/BS RELATIONSHIPS

Research to date demonstrates that like their "natural" counterparts, relationships created by programs are dynamic and complex. As they take shape, they follow a number of different trajectories. Once formed, they can serve a variety of purposes and hold distinct meanings for those involved. And throughout their course, they might require or benefit from a range of programmatic supports (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992).

Conducting an assessment of an intervention that offers a treatment as multifaceted and relatively novel as programmatic relationships requires a research approach that is, at least in part, exploratory--that can produce an extensive and detailed data set, and yield comprehensive and nuanced results. At the same time, because BB/BS relationships are intended to serve as a youth intervention, this research requires systematic measurement--such as the identification of key relationship benchmarks--that can reliably discriminate the types of relationships that are most effective in supporting youth. Accordingly, while P/PV's BB/BS relationships inquiry is mainly exploratory and qualitative, it is augmented by the quantification of key relationship variables--such as the youth's trust in the adult--that have been identified in prior mentoring studies as reliably distinguishing relationships that had formed, endured and garnered participants' commitment from those that had not (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Styles and Morrow, 1992).

This chapter explores these research methods and how they were used to define and categorize BB/BS relationships. We first describe measurement strategies; then report on the data analysis procedures through which the relationship types in this sample were identified; and finally, describe the key relationship types and their primary characteristics.

MEASURING BB/BS RELATIONSHIPS

As noted, a primary mandate of this research was to develop a comprehensive, descriptive profile of relationships that take shape under the BB/BSA rubric. To this end, protocols for the first round of interviews were semistructured. The open-ended nature of these interviews allowed key relationship issues and patterns of relationship development unique to BB/BSA to emerge unencumbered by assumptions or directions of the interviewer or protocol. For example, during the unstructured segments of interviews, participants were encouraged to introduce and expound on the issues they perceived as being critical to their relationship's overall character and development. In addition, since the research is intended not only to produce systematic documentation of how "created" relationships form, but also to codify their measurement, an important function of first-round protocols was to test the applicability of the key relationship variables and dimensions derived from P/PV's previous research-based knowledge of programmatically created relationships to the BB/BSA context.

A second research task was to move beyond description of the various relationship types and distinguish those that are more and less able to provide consistent support to the youth. Indeed, BB/BSA's mission is to provide relationships that optimally promote youth development--that is, to fill needs in youth's lives that, if left untended, could erode their road to stable, healthy adulthood. At the same time, it is important to note that the research described here did not involve an impact study. Benchmarks of youth development were not assessed before and after a relationship formed to measure potential change, nor was a control group developed to ensure that measured changes resulted from the adult/youth relationship and not from other factors that affect youth development.

Rather, what this study assesses is whether--and how--a sample of BB/BS matches became relationships that met the program's guidelines and standards--that is, were consistent and ongoing, and were perceived as a strong connection providing support that was not only valuable to the youth, but was also of the type that research demonstrates is pivotal to youth development.

The task of distinguishing characteristics of BB/BS relationships as being more or less supportive of youth was guided significantly by P/PV's prior research into programmatically created relationships, and related research on the types of support consistently associated with positive developmental trajectories for youth. P/PV's own research served to narrow the scope of the inquiry by highlighting key issues, dynamics and patterns of development of particular relevance to programmatically created relationships--such as the pair members' expectations or their process of negotiating roles. Further, our research identified key relationship variables that consistently distinguish programmatically created relationships that develop and sustain from those that falter or decline (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992). Across P/PV's research on mentoring, the volunteers' approach to the match and style of relating to the youth have been identified as important factors in distinguishing more and less effective mentoring relationships (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992; Freedman, 1988). We found that when volunteers were flexible in adapting their expectations to the realities of the youth's lives; were willing to share the task of defining the relationship's focus with the youth; and interacted in a style characterized more by empathy and patience than by criticism and frustration, relationships were more likely to be lasting, consistent and crystallized. Further, mentors taking such an approach were far more likely to be perceived and utilized by youth as a source of assistance or support.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the availability, extent and nature of support provided by the adult were specific focal points of the research. A number of sources indicate that support plays a key role in determining the strength, durability and effectiveness of a connection between a youth and an unrelated adult. P/PV's research on mentoring has found a strong and consistent association between lasting relationships--in which partners report a strong sense of commitment and attachment--and the youth's perception that his or her mentor is a significant source of support. Support from an unrelated adult has also been found to be effective with and valued by a wide range of youth, including those who exhibit multiple

needs and experience multiple risk factors or hazards. A firmly established and growing body of literature demonstrates that dimensions of support, such as autonomy and a sense of security that help is available, are important not only to the positive development of adolescents in general, but particularly in protecting at-risk youth from the many challenges to healthy development present in their environments (Furstenberg, 1993; Connell, 1992; Werner and Smith, 1992; Ferguson, 1990; Rutter, 1987; Garnezy, 1985).

P/PV combined insights from the most recent research on at-risk youth with findings from its own adult/youth relationships agenda to identify dimensions of support relevant to programatically created relationships involving at-risk youth (Haensly and Parsons, 1993; Furstenberg, 1993; Connell, 1990; Sandler, Miller, Short, and Wolchick, 1989; Cowen and Work, 1988; Rutter, 1987; Garnezy, 1985). These support dimensions include: (1) esteem support, defined as support of a positive self-concept; (2) coping support, defined as concrete assistance or emotional support that eases the experience of crisis or stress; (3) "voice and choice," or support for the youth's growing autonomy, defined here as a youth's sense of voice in determining the relationship's activities, its communications, and the type and frequency of help provided by the adult; and (4) "reliable alliance," defined as the youth's perception that their adult partner is reliable, and can be trusted to be "on their side" and forthcoming with support in times of need, an aspect of support that some research suggests is as effective as tangible assistance.

Having established through reconnaissance of first-round interview data that these aspects of relationships and dimensions of support were germane to BB/BS relationships, measurement at follow-up focused on exploring these relationship variables. Generally, protocols for second-round interviews were designed with a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended questions, or of qualitative and quantitative measurement strategies. Combining these strategies in second-round interviews allowed quantification of the primary relationship types and their key distinguishing features, without sacrificing the more nuanced, detailed data that are generally beyond the measurement capacity of quantitative methods. For example, in both rounds of interviews, participants were consistently asked to define and reflect on critical incidents or relationship turning points. This allowed them to articulate their answers with a complexity equal to that of the issues and processes present in their relationships. In addition to ensuring that the limits intrinsic to a particular research method did not constrain the full documentation of relationships, this multi-method approach enhanced the validity of research findings, since data collected by one strategy could be cross-verified by those obtained through another.

CLASSIFYING BB/BS RELATIONSHIPS

Analysis of data yielded by our measurement strategies--a data set comprising 295 transcripts, and totalling approximately 9,500 pages--proceeded in multiple stages. First, data were reduced and analyzed for each match. Data generated by open-ended questions and participant-initiated discussion were "content-analyzed," a qualitative, inductive process that allows themes and categories to emerge naturally from the data.

Next, caseworker notes and answers from the closed-ended items were examined for each match to identify: the match's length; frequency of meeting; content of activities; content of the conversation; type and extent of support provided; partners' perception of the match and of each other; the relationship's meaning (namely, volunteer's satisfaction with the relationship's progress or youth's perception of the adult as a reliable source of support); and the salient dynamics of the relationship (such as ongoing conflict or consistent cooperation). Data from this second source were then combined and compared with the initial data. Any discrepancies that arose between reports from the volunteers and youth were resolved through triangulation or cross-verification with caseworker reports.

Once this process was completed, a comparative content analysis was conducted across all 82 matches to discriminate primary types of relationships. This analysis revealed that matches tended to segregate themselves into two groups, based primarily on the participants' perception of and feelings toward their partner and relationship, particularly as the match grew and changed over time. In one group, the reports from pair members were distinctly positive at both rounds of interviews. Adults in these matches demonstrated a high degree of liking and acceptance of the child, were satisfied and comfortable with their role and scope of influence, and further discussed their involvement in terms that described a highly consistent and--where possible--long-term commitment to the youth and relationship. Youth, in turn, evinced similarly significant degrees of attachment, satisfaction and desire to continue with the relationship. The majority of these youth further reported that their adult partner had become a positive and valuable source of support, and that their relationships were both significant and meaningful in their lives.

In terms of satisfaction, the second group of matches were not readily distinguishable from the first at the point of the first-round interview. Nine months later, however, participants consistently expressed ambivalent or, in some cases, negative feelings about their partner and match. Adults in these matches frequently described limits or conditions on their continued involvement, primarily owing to dissatisfaction with the youth's progress or the relationship's apparent impact. And while fewer youth than adults in this group expressed a desire to curtail the match, youth consistently indicated dissatisfaction or discomfort with particular aspects of their adult's behavior, attitude or style of relating. Youth in these matches were far less likely to identify their partners as sources of positive and consistent support: some reported feeling that the volunteer was "too pushy" or "put me down," while others described uncertainty that the adult volunteer would respond during a problem time and would be willing to do so in a way with which the youth felt comfortable.

Categorizing the relationships according to the pair's perceptions of their partner and the match appeared to have distinguished a group of relationships that, at least intuitively, one would expect to endure, satisfy BB/BSA requirements and support youth effectively. However, to be considered an effective relationship under the BB/BSA rubric and to reliably support the youth, matches must meet consistently and do so over sufficient time to foster relationship development. Thus, to validate whether our categories had identified matches that met

BB/BSA requirements and provided support to the youth, the relationship types were cross-tabulated with frequency and consistency of meeting and with relationship duration.

As shown in Table 4, this cross-tabulation demonstrated that the relationships more positively regarded by participants, which we term "developmental," met consistently 93 percent of the time, while their less positively perceived counterparts, which we term "prescriptive," did so in only 29 percent of cases. At the second round of interviews, 91 percent of developmental relationships were ongoing, while only 32 percent of matches in the prescriptive group persisted. Moreover, many of the developmental relationships who met inconsistently or had terminated could trace their problems to factors external to the match, such as the return of a youth's father. While external circumstances did interrupt the consistency and longevity of matches in the second group as well, match inconsistency based on partners' dissatisfaction preceded or coincided with the influence of circumstances outside the match in all but one case. Thus, terminations and sporadic meetings among the prescriptive matches can be attributed primarily to dissatisfaction, disappointment and tension that existed in these relationships.

The cross-tabulation shown in Table 4 thus verifies that classifying relationships on the basis of participants' perceptions is a reliable way of discriminating among BB/BS relationships. Additional analysis revealed that this system consistently distinguished matches according to their ability to satisfy BB/BSA requirements and support youth. Of course, as described in the chapters that follow, relationships that shared a common designation were by no means monolithic: differences emerged according to gender, membership in a shared- or cross-race match, and the focus of the relationship's assistance or the degree of support provided. Nevertheless, relationships of the two types, "developmental" and "prescriptive," differed consistently with respect to the pair members' satisfaction with the relationship; the youth's perceptions of volunteers' support; and the relationship's status--in particular its frequency and consistency of meeting, controlling for external influences unrelated to match quality.

The final step in the analysis process was to examine each relationship type for its primary traits and key distinguishing features. Relationships of the two types were compared along a number of key dimensions: the pairs' activities, the content and style of their characteristic communications, the volunteer's style and the youth's trust, which prior research identified as being of particular relevance to relationships that are programmatically created. Given that one type of relationship garnered partners' commitment, conveyed a sense of support to the youth and, perhaps most important, was associated with relationship consistency and longevity, this final phase of data analysis particularly focused on detecting factors and patterns of interaction associated with relationship development or decline.

This comparative analysis revealed that across developmental and prescriptive relationships, significant, patterned differences existed in the volunteers' initial expectations of the match, in how they responded when these expectations conflicted with their youth's and with the match's subsequent reality, and in their styles of relating to the youth as relationships developed. Consistent differences between the youth in the two relationship types were far less

Table 4

**STATUS AND CONSISTENCY OF MEETING
BY RELATIONSHIP TYPE**

RELATIONSHIP TYPE	MET		ENDLINE STATUS^c	
	Consistently^a	Sporadically^b	Ongoing	Terminated
Developmental Relationships (n=54)	93% (n=50)	7% (n=4)	91% (n=49)	9% (n=5)
Prescriptive Relationships (n=28)	29% (n=8)	71% (n=20)	32% (n=9)	68% (n=10)

^a Matches met weekly or biweekly on a regular basis.

^b Gaps of at least two months between meetings occurred.

^c Includes matches in the process of terminating or that had not met in more than three months.

apparent: youth in both types of relationships were similar in age; described similar expectations of a friend "to take them places" and "to have fun with"; and, according to available records, were equally likely to have suffered abuse or deprivation. Further, volunteers in both types of relationships reported having been matched with youth who were initially reticent and unable to provide feedback or reassurance about the relationship. While a more finely tuned analysis of youth characteristics than was possible for this study might reveal systematic variations among youth that could have contributed to the relationship differences uncovered here, available indicators suggest that the attitudes, expectations and styles of the volunteers were the most salient factors in determining how, and into what types, relationships evolved.

DEVELOPMENTAL AND PRESCRIPTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Overall, 54 of the 82 relationships in this study met the criteria for the group of relationships distinguished by pair members' positive regard for their partners and consistent, long-term meeting. These relationships were given the label "developmental" because the adult partner in the match focused on providing youth with a comfort zone in which to address a broad range of developmental tasks--such as building emotional well-being, developing social skills, or gaining straightforward exposure to a range of recreational and cultural activities. Developmental volunteers responded flexibly to the youth, adjusting any preconceived notions to the reality, circumstances and needs of their young partner. Further, these volunteers intentionally incorporated youth into decision-making about the relationship, allowing them to help choose activities and have a voice in determining whether and when the adult would provide advice and guidance. While these adults set limits for youth, these limits were generally negotiated and focused primarily on behavior within the relationship.

The remaining 28 relationships in our sample were classified as "prescriptive," so called because adults in these matches demonstrated consistent reluctance or difficulty in adjusting their already formulated notions about their youth and the potential of BB/BSA's intervention to yield rapid, readily discernible and long-term changes in their youth's lives. The majority of these volunteers approached decision-making in a manner that became more prescriptive as the relationship developed, meaning that activities, topics of conversation and frequency of disclosure were "prescribed" by the adult, generally without the youth's input. These volunteers' approaches were more change-driven and their targets more narrowly defined than were those of adults in developmental matches. Prescriptive adults tended to stipulate limits and goals for the youth, even on issues that extended well beyond the relationship.

Unlike developmental matches, which were relatively homogeneous, prescriptive matches were diverse. Seventeen of the 28 prescriptive volunteers shared a desire to transform youth's values and habits or skills and accomplishments. They generally hoped to accomplish these changes within their match's first year, and certainly by its second. The 11 remaining prescriptive volunteers were distinguished by difficulty accepting the terms or limits intrinsic to an intervention-based adult/youth friendship--namely, that the responsibility to maintain the

match and to provide feedback and reassurance about its meaning would fall primarily on the adult.

The two primary relationship types also followed markedly distinct paths of relationship development. After relatively extended and pacific periods primarily devoted to relationship-building--that is, to establishing trust and partnership, and to enjoying activities--the majority of youth in developmental relationships began to demonstrate a pattern of independent help-seeking in which they voluntarily divulged such difficulties as poor grades or family strife. Moreover, once their relationships were crystallized, nearly three-quarters of developmental volunteers were successful in involving youth in conversations or activities that targeted such key areas of youth development as academic performance and classroom behavior. By contrast, almost all prescriptive relationships demonstrated patterns of tension and discontent as they developed. Over time, often after initial attempts at airing difficulties, many youth in these relationships switched from help-seeking to self-shielding behaviors, such as dodging conversations about problems or concealing report cards. Only a small number of youth reported that they routinely confided difficulties to prescriptive adult partners.

Not surprisingly, consistent with other positive indicators that distinguished developmental relationships, the majority of young people in developmental matches reported a strong "felt sense" of support from their Big Brother or Big Sister, demonstrating a consistent belief that their adult partner would readily and reliably offer support if the need arose, and, further, reporting that their partner contributed to their self-esteem. The majority of youth in prescriptive relationships, on the other hand, did not perceive their Big Brother or Big Sister as a source of consistent or valuable support. Many were uncertain of the adult's commitment and were unsure that they would respond during a problem time, while others reported feeling that the volunteers' attempts to convey support were "too pushy" or "made me feel small."

That the vast majority of developmental matches met consistently and created lasting relationships that supplied valuable support to the youth--while less than one-third of those that were prescriptive were similarly able--is both a key finding of this research and a strong indication that developmental relationships are more likely than prescriptive matches to satisfy BB/BSA criteria. Of course, demonstrating that developmental relationships led to positive outcomes is well outside the scope of this research. (It will be a focus of the forthcoming impact study.) However, in finding that developmental relationships were consistently more likely to incorporate youth into efforts that promote their growth and target such key areas of their development as classroom behavior or academic skills, this research strongly suggests that developmental relationships more closely match the type of support-focused and intervention-oriented relationships BB/BSA seeks to promote.

Examining the developmental relationships identified in this research thus provides an important basis for identifying key relationship practices that promote BB/BS matches and, more broadly, program-created relationships that address some of the support needs of at-risk youth. In the same vein, examination of prescriptive matches yields valuable insights into relationship practices that are less likely to result in longer-term relationships with at-risk youth.

Generalizations about BB/BS relationships at large--in particular, predictions about what proportion is likely to be developmental versus prescriptive--cannot be made based on this study. Addressing such questions would require research involving a much larger and more fully representative sample of BB/BS volunteers and youth. Our study does, however, provide valuable information concerning the different types of BB/BS relationships that form and how these relationships evolve. It is important to reiterate that, while systematic, rigorous and detailed, the conclusions presented here are subject to the limits on inference intrinsic to qualitative research. Still, we are confident that our study presents an accurate and thorough understanding of the BB/BS relationships that participated in this study, and that the salient issues and key themes identified here will pertain to other BB/BS relationships, and, thus, delineate important directions and key variables for further inquiry.

III. THE VOLUNTEERS: ROLES AND GOALS

Questions asked during interviews called on volunteers to reflect on their motives for joining BB/BS, their expectations prior to being matched (how these related to their relationship's subsequent reality), and their feelings about their relationship's progress (e.g., satisfaction, frustration or sense of accomplishment). Content analysis of volunteers' responses to these questions revealed that adults in prescriptive relationships and those in developmental relationships held very distinct attitudes toward their youth and the BB/BS relationship. In some instances, these differences reflected diverging notions about child-rearing: developmental volunteers typically reported placing high priority on giving youth opportunities to practice autonomy, while prescriptive adults emphasized the importance of consistent adult monitoring. Different conceptions of where a youth's development should stand at a particular age also accounted for some variations in attitude. Overall, however, the findings suggest that prescriptive volunteers and developmental volunteers carried distinct underlying philosophies of the BB/BSA intervention and its purpose into the match.

Participants' accounts revealed that for the vast majority of developmental volunteers (50 of 54), the overarching purpose of their involvement was to compensate youth for the type of deficits frequently linked to an absent parent--e.g., fewer recreational opportunities, fewer resources, or fewer adults to reassure a young person of his or her worth. Volunteers in these relationships placed primary emphasis on nurturance--or on striking a balance between nurturance and guidance--and took primary responsibility for building and maintaining their match.

While a number of developmental adults achieved a balance between nurturance and guidance over time, the balance in most prescriptive relationships consistently tipped toward guidance--for some, toward attempts to regulate and enforce. Not surprisingly, most prescriptive volunteers (18 of 28) indicated that their primary purpose was transformative--to guide the youth into new values, attitudes and behaviors. Further, since volunteers in prescriptive relationships expected their young partners to conform to their guidance and thus justify their continuing effort with improvements in grades, manners or school behavior, greater responsibility for the relationship shifted to the youth.

Of course, volunteers' approaches were not static. Some whose early interactions contained elements of a prescriptive approach shifted to a more consistently developmental style relatively early in their match history, often in response to suggestions made by caseworkers or contained in agency trainings or materials. By abandoning preconceived notions of the characteristics they believed a youth should possess and recasting their expectations of the type of development the relationship should promote, these volunteers reshaped their approach to one that more closely matched the realities of the youth's life history and circumstances. But the number of volunteers whose approach was primarily prescriptive and who--through either self-reflection or caseworker intervention--switched to a more effective, developmental approach was small: only four cases in our sample.

Clearly, volunteers' initial attitudes and approach were key to the type of relationship that subsequently took shape between the partners. Data analysis indicates that whether a volunteer's initial approach to the relationship and youth was developmental or prescriptive shaped ongoing expectations, informed their definition of appropriate roles to take, and influenced their choice of goals to target. These key aspects of the volunteers' approaches to their relationships--in particular, roles assumed and goals selected--are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

DEFINING ROLES

Given the depth of difference in developmental and prescriptive volunteers' sense of purpose in the match, it is not surprising that their accounts revealed distinct self-views when it came to defining roles. Nearly all (51 of 54) volunteers whose approach was developmental described themselves as acting in the capacity of an older sibling or adult friend--a companion who was peer-like in enjoying fun and novel activities, but adult in the type of resources provided. Developmental volunteers viewed their supportive role primarily through the lens of the developing friendship--seeing themselves as reliable and consistently available friends, while providing advice and guidance primarily at the youth's request.

For those whose approach was prescriptive, the role priorities were essentially reversed. The majority of prescriptive volunteers (17 of 28) saw themselves as acting, first, in the role of a teacher or parent, and only secondarily as a peer or friend. The remaining 11 prescriptive volunteers demonstrated a consistent pattern in expecting youth to play a more equal role in maintaining the relationship and in providing feedback about its progress and significance.

Developmental Volunteers

Developmental volunteers described themselves primarily as older siblings, supportive friends or companions to their young partners. Over the course of their relationships, these volunteers emphasized the "friendship" aspects of the relationship, focusing on establishing a bond, a feeling of attachment, a sense of equality and, further, the mutual enjoyment of shared time. As these volunteers described:

[I'm] more a brother or a friend, I guess, than a parent or anything. That's the way I try to act and be with him. I don't want him to think--and I don't think he does--that I'm like a teacher or a parent or something . . . I don't want him to be uncomfortable, like I'm going to be there always looking over his shoulder and always there to report him for things he does wrong and that he tells me. I just want to be there as his friend to help him out. (Match 44.BB)

I want her to feel comfortable. So, instead of me puttin' on the radio station I like and her just sitting there, I let her have control, let her listen to what she wants . . . (Match 19.BS)

Really I guess this whole time, we've just been trying to get to know each other and to feel comfortable around each other . . . I think that we're just like we're buddies. 'Cause she just went through a period where she'll say I'd like to be the Big Sister and you can be the Little Sister. And I think that it's just somebody older that she feels, you know, good about. I just think we're more, we're like buddies. Maybe like we're sisters; I don't know, could be. But I don't feel like I'm a parent or aunt or anything like that. (Match 15.BS)

Developmental volunteers reported deriving a sense of meaningful accomplishment from the relationship itself--drawing satisfaction from the growing meaning the partners held for each other and from evolving closeness and trust. As this volunteer explained, what fueled his sense of satisfaction was "the fact that [my Little Brother] considered me a friend. I think he thinks of me as someone he can trust." (Match 31.BB) For another, what signalled success was:

He started to open up to me a little more . . . when we're together, he initiates a lot more conversation and stuff like that . . . And I guess it does feel like, as I wanted it to feel, more like a big brother/little brother relationship instead of me being an authoritarian figure . . . I don't wanna feel like I'm here and I'm older than you, so whatever I say goes. I don't want it to be like that. (Match 22.BB)

Like the volunteer cited above, developmental adults were generally cautious about stepping into an authoritarian role. Cognizant of the challenge that befriending an unknown adult can pose to a youth--and sensitive to the social role of a child or teen--they understood that with each disclosure, youth risked criticism or penalty from the more powerful adult. In focusing on relationship-building, these volunteers withheld punitive or authoritarian responses intentionally, in the belief that such approaches could jeopardize evolving closeness and trust. As these volunteers explained:

I remember being raised as a kid. I don't think kids respond well to being like: I want you to do this or else. I think kids aren't going to respond to that. I think you have to let kids talk to you on their level, and when they feel comfortable enough . . . I said look if you ever wanna talk about anything . . . we'll talk about your father . . . if you ever wanna say something, like that your mother makes you angry, I'm not gonna tell her nothin'. I'll just sit here and listen. (Match 39.BB)

I would hate to turn her off of me by me becoming a heavy. I guess I just try to sit down and talk to her about, you know, what could happen after if that ever happened again. (Match 15.BS)

I don't wanna seem like I'm trying to come off, I know everything [and] I'm trying to tell him . . . I don't wanna try to push him away too much . . . I just

listen to what he has to say and I try not to deal too much with life. (Match 22.BB)

As discussions with interviewers about their roles revealed, adults in developmental relationships neither conceived of themselves as surrogate parents, nor defined their roles as parental. While most prescriptive volunteers tended to view their role as overlapping or contiguous with that of parents, developmental adults saw their involvement as distinct from, and in key ways incompatible with, parenting. As one volunteer reported:

A couple of times his mom has said well, you know, I was wondering if you could talk to Randy.³ He had some behavior problem in school . . . and I just said hey, you know, what's going on; and [was] just mostly light because it was nothing really major. You don't want to turn the kid off, you know: oh, you better this, this and this . . . it's not a good idea to use the meetings [for], well, if you don't do this then we don't meet type of thing. That's like the worst thing you could do . . . Because then he's being punished twice. Because usually the mother has something else that she, you know, he's grounded or he can't watch television, whatever they wanna do. And then for me to say well, we're not gonna meet because you don't know how to behave in school, there's no real correlation to us meeting and him behaving in school, you know. Unless that's the case, but I don't see how that could be, you know. It would be very hard to say that. You know, if it has nothing to do with it, then I don't think it would work as a discipline tool anyway. And then, you know, the kid was deprived of having the meeting and whatever we do and just the fellowship of the older brother type of person. (Match 04.BB)

And another related:

As far as with Amanda's mom and communication, we do communicate to the point that she told me today that Amanda got in trouble last week and what she got in trouble for . . . her mom confided to let me know what was going on, that she's working with the social worker at school, you know, and all this other, so we do communicate . . . [and] I've asked her mom if I've made a difference and her mom said, to a point, but, you know, she still back-talks me, da, da, da, da. Basically, my understanding is, I'm there for Amanda first and I can't make Amanda a lady or have her not back-talk her mom. As long as I'm there, as far as I'm concerned, for Amanda and for what she needs or what I think she needs, that's all that's important to me . . . [and] you know, here again, I don't communicate what Amanda tells me to her mom. (Match 16.BS)

³ All names have been changed to protect the respondents' identities.

Developmental volunteers took a similarly "hands-off" approach when it came to the explicit transmissions of values, in particular holding back opinions or beliefs that were in clear disagreement with those held by the youth's family. These volunteers generally reported feeling that an attempt to transform the youth's values was beyond the scope of their involvement:

I would never correct her, you know. Because I just didn't think that was part of my function. [I did say] I'm not comfortable with this going on any longer. I feel very strongly that it's not one person's place to try to change another person's values. My belief is that you cannot change other people. You can expose them to things and provide them with the opportunity to change but you cannot, you cannot actually physically change them. (Match 23.BS)

It's not like me bestowing upon a deprived kid the outlook on life that he needs to succeed . . . I have some more world experience than he does so that gives me a certain status in our relationship . . . [but] it's more like we're friends. (Match 01.BB)

While the linchpin of developmental relationships was friendship, and developmental volunteers strove to equalize pair members' roles, responsibility for meeting was a clear and consistent exception. All developmental volunteers took responsibility for making and maintaining contact. This does not mean that youth in these matches never or rarely initiated contact; as the relationship developed, they often did. But the crucial distinction lay in the fact that the youth were not required to do so. Maintaining contact in developmental matches was seen as more appropriate for the adult in the relationship:

It was basically me initiating a lot of the calls, as it's always been . . . which I have no problem with; that doesn't bother me because I know how kids are when it comes to that kind of stuff. (Match 22.BB)

While sometimes disappointed, developmental volunteers overall understood that the feedback and reassurance characteristic of adult-to-adult relationships was often beyond their young partners' capacity or developmental age, and was hence unlikely to be unavailable. As one volunteer who had been participating in the program for well over a decade explained:

[You know], you see these movies where finally the kid blurts out all these problems and it's a catharsis, and [in] the movies, everybody hugs and cries and so forth. And I think I wonder if that's ever going to happen to me, but you know it really, really never has. (Match 78.BB)

Another reported:

One time that was kind of strained was when we were gonna make tie-dye stuff and so we went to Target and got a bunch of plain t-shirts and a bunch of

plain socks and went over to my house and, you know, we were doing it and it was fun, but you know, she just never talked, you know. So it was just kind of like, okay, you know, it was frustrating, you know. [I didn't say anything.] I mean I knew that it was gonna take her some time to loosen up and you just can't force somebody to trust you, so I just knew I was gonna have to either, you know, pay or play. But you can't force somebody not to be shy, you have to just wait . . . it's kind of a grown-up thing to be able to . . . say gee, I really appreciate. Because in a way, you know, when you're a kid you kind of expect it, which is fine. (Match 58.BS)

These volunteers, instead, looked to other sources to extract a sense of their worth--to evidence of the child's joy or, as will be discussed further in Chapter VII, to feedback from the caseworker:

You know, Lisa being Lisa, you don't get that feedback in words, but you do, you know, drive up and the kid is standing there and as soon as she sees you she smiles, you know, it's like you get that feedback. (Match 23.BS)

I guess the feedback never met my expectations. I think that the way I handled that was, when I realized it was below my expectations, I let the caseworker know and just said, is he getting anything out of this? Is he enjoying it? She said he really was. At that point, I said to myself, basically, "you're not going to get feedback, so just deal with it." (Match 69.BB)

Prescriptive Volunteers

When asked to reflect on their role in the relationship and youth's life overall, over half of prescriptive volunteers (17 of 28) described themselves as interacting with youth more as parents and authorities, and less as equals or friends. While they did not attempt to assume the comprehensive care-taking or time-intensive responsibilities of parents--in terms of guidance, regulation and the transmittal of values--prescriptive volunteers frequently strove to act "in loco parentis." As these volunteers reported:

The undercurrent of this whole thing is to try to help him grow up with character and the self-achievement that he is capable of, and that's what I'm trying to do. Because I'm not--like I say, social chairman has no interest to me--I'm not gonna waste my time . . . a friendship of course is the heart of this thing and I've got a strong friendship, but . . . the thing that drives me, I want to see character development . . . it would be easy for him to go off on that track . . . in his environment. (Match 36.BB)

I feel like it's probably more a mother-parent type thing because I feel that she needs so much love because she doesn't get it at home, but I try to teach with love . . . It's really kind of touchy sometimes. Her parents are so unrespons-

ible that trying to point out that you don't wanna be like that, it's really hard because so many times . . . they're not doing the right thing; there's always stuff going on at their house that I try to deal with. I want her to get out of it the fact that she has a direct hold on her life, but she's great for: "I didn't do my homework because I forgot my textbook; I didn't go to school today because Mom overslept and didn't get us up to go to the bus." And I'm always: "Linda, you have to be responsible for your life. Your mom's not going to school, you're going to school. When I was your age, I set my alarm clock and I got myself up." (Match 08.BS)

These 17 volunteers also felt their role included regulating their young partner's behavior at home, at school or in their neighborhoods. A number set tasks, expected compliance from the youth, and attempted to enforce the tasks' completion with rewards and penalties. As one volunteer described:

One thing, when we were working on her grades last year and I was really trying to make her so that she didn't get any Ds or Fs, we hung out [going to an amusement park] as a carrot in front of her. I kept emphasizing to her, who's responsible for your report? And she'd say, "I am." Who's responsible for these grades? "I am." Nobody else is responsible but you, right? She didn't get a great report last time, so I told her when we get together we're going to do homework and study [and nothing else] . . . I've really been on her more as far as calling her and asking, have you got your homework done? (Match 08.BS)

While developmental volunteers--in striving to create friendships that crossed significant gaps in age--made deliberate attempts to avoid using power that risked the youth's trust, the majority of prescriptive volunteers neither expressed this nor behaved as though this were a concern. These volunteers, consistent with the transformative nature of their overall approach, instead argued that it was more appropriate to their role not to withhold, but to exert influence to achieve the aims they set for the youth. As this volunteer expressed:

I know that when he met with the caseworker, he said there were some things that I did that upset him. And I would say: I know when those things are and I don't press the issue . . . but I push him to do things. Push him, or encourage him would be a better word. Or suggest, why haven't you done this? You promised me you were going to do this, this and this; you promised me you'd do the dishes three times a week because your mother is working. And you did them one week and then you quit. Right, you know you're out of shape, you need to lose a little weight. You promised me you'd do five push-ups every day, are you doing them. No, I'm not doing them. You told me you were going to get into some extracurricular activities, have you done it. No, I haven't done any. You told me you'd do your homework every night and get your grades up. No, he's not. You told me you wouldn't sit in front of that

TV and play Nintendo, are you still doing it? Yeah. Those are the kinds of things, on and on and on, he's just in a rut. That's what probably upsets him or at least it's not pleasant . . . but those are the kinds of things that he needs, to tell you the truth, to hear. (Match 36.BB)

In the following case, the volunteer felt he needed to instill "better" habits of responsibility and cleanliness than were exhibited in the youth's home:

Maybe every other visit, we'd come over to my house and we'd work in the yard or do something of that nature. Because I saw that where he was living none of that was ever being done. The house was in disrepair and never clean in his house. There didn't seem to be a big concern for cleanliness or responsibility for the property. And I used to bring him [home] and have him help me do things around the house. (Match 03.BB)

By contrast, developmental volunteers reported that to regulate patterns in youth's behavior that occur outside the context of the relationship--and to follow up with efforts at enforcement--exceeded what is both appropriate and possible, given the intrinsic limits of their role. For example, when asked whether he ever tried to teach his youth to be responsible, this volunteer responded: "I would, but I don't think I have the opportunity to do that--he's never done anything in my presence that I would consider irresponsible." When asked how he responded to his Little Brother's failing grades, this volunteer further reported:

Basically, I stay out of it. I will tell him, I really think you can do better if you try. I'm not going to tell him that I'm disappointed in him because he has bad grades. But I let him know that you know you can do better, because I know you're smarter than that, you're more intelligent . . . I don't mind telling him I'm disappointed if it's something that directly affects me, you see. I guess I was disappointed, but I didn't wanna tell him that because his mother would relay all that to him. (Match 64.BB)

A developmental Big Sister, when asked whether she focused on providing discipline in her young partner's life, explained:

I don't feel that's my place. Maybe if she did something that made me feel uncomfortable, I would tell her, but as far as disciplining her, that's her parent's place. (Match 13.BS)

Overall, prescriptive volunteers' expectations that the intervention would promote relatively rapid, demonstrable changes in the youth emerged as both problematic and unrealistic--particularly given that these prescriptive matches were more likely to be terminated, demonstrate inconsistent meeting and be lacking in satisfaction for both parties. For a subgroup of 11 prescriptive volunteers, however, problems in expectations appeared to center less on their

view of the relationship as an agent of change, and more on their understanding and expectations of youth.

This group of volunteers was most likely not only to have problems maintaining relationship consistency (a difficulty shared by many of the prescriptive volunteers who viewed their role as transformative), but to begin the relationship with problems meeting the program's requirements. Unfortunately, inconsistent meeting patterns led to contradictory reports in adult interviews and missing data from those with youth, making it difficult for data analysis to establish patterns in the attitudes and behavior of this subgroup of volunteers and youth.

One pattern that did emerge clearly was that eight of these 11 prescriptive adults felt that they and their partner should play more equal roles in providing ongoing feedback about the meaning and effectiveness of the relationship. Failing to grasp that such feedback may be beyond the developmental capacity of many BB/BS youth, these volunteers frequently misidentified youth's reticence, interpreting it as disinterest, or, in some cases, laziness or excessive selfishness. Further, in the absence of reassurance and feedback from youth, these prescriptive adults found it difficult to persevere in the relationship. As this volunteer described the ending of her relationship:

It kind of ended, it kind of dropped off. It wasn't like, you know, one day I saw her, and then didn't see her anymore. It was like I went by her house a couple of times and you know, we didn't go out or anything. I would just go over there and sit with her for a little while. She might have had company or was watching TV, so I only stayed a few minutes, and that's just how it ended. (Match 18.BS)

Another prescriptive volunteer described her frustration:

I would say things like . . . you know you're not saying much. Do you not like me as a Big Sister? . . . And I said, you're not giving me any feedback and it makes me think you don't want to be with me, and she would say, "No, no, that's not what I'm saying." (Match 80.BS)

Further, in six of these prescriptive relationships, volunteers expected youth to share responsibility for contact--a belief that ensured inconsistent meeting (and caused volunteers considerable frustration), since none of the youth in this study mastered this responsibility. As these prescriptive volunteers related:

She doesn't call. I feel like I work at the relationship more than she does . . . it's just like this calling thing [that upsets me]. I get stubborn and I'm like, I'm not gonna call, 'cause I asked her to call. Then I'll get angry because I haven't heard from her at all and I'll get real close to calling and, then, I'm like, no, let's just wait and see. (Match 30.BS)

There was a--we're gonna call it a learning game there--and you know, I gave him time to think, to give him a chance to call me back. As a matter of fact, when I would leave, I'd say look, it's your responsibility now--call me up. Now if he didn't call me in a couple of weeks--then, one time it went three weeks. If he didn't call me in a few weeks, then I'd make that move. But the goal is to get him thinking, hey, you know, I've got a responsibility in this relationship, too, and if I screwed up last, then I've gotta do something to make amends for it, you know. And it didn't always work out that way . . . (Match 25.BB)

CHOOSING GOALS

Volunteers were asked each time they were interviewed to describe their goals for the match and their ongoing experiences in attempting to realize their aims. The section that follows is based in part on these self-reports. At the same time, however, our research showed that volunteers' stated goals were often quite distinct from those they actively sought to accomplish with, or instill in, their youth. For this reason, stated goals were cross-referenced with youth's responses, caseworkers' reports, and youth's and volunteers' descriptions of common and ongoing conversations and activities. In cases where volunteers' stated goals contradicted these reports, those that were consistently acted on were selected, de facto, as the relationship's actual goals.

In one sense, all adults who participated in the study shared similar goals for their young partners--to do well in school, succeed in their aspirations, and realize a psychologically, socially and economically fulfilling maturity. However, developmental and prescriptive volunteers differed consistently in their understanding of how best their own efforts--and the relationships they shaped--could facilitate these ends. Perhaps most crucially, their assessment of the relationship's capacity as an intervention to bring about these desired outcomes--and in what time frame--differed considerably.

Developmental volunteers viewed the relationship's capacity to effect marked, demonstrable change in such areas as literacy, grades, school functioning or neighborhood behavior more modestly than did prescriptive volunteers, seeing their own involvement as one strand among many in an overall pattern of influences on the youth. While developmental volunteers sought to influence these performance areas of their youth's development, they generally did not pinpoint them as primary targets of their efforts. In one sense, developmental volunteers appeared to have less confidence in the relationship's ability to yield deep-reaching change. But in fact, they placed greater faith in the relationship in and of itself as being a source of significant benefit for the youth.

Viewed comparatively, the goals of developmental and prescriptive volunteers showed little intersection. Fully 47 of the 54 developmental volunteers directed their primary efforts toward two of the following: "being there" as a consistent presence, building self-esteem, or providing fun and exposure to new activities. While 13 prescriptive volunteers pointed to

these as aspects of their involvement, only five directed their efforts solely toward the goals on this list. Further, while 19 prescriptive volunteers directed their primary efforts toward improving school performance and/or instilling values, only six developmental adults targeted these as paramount aims.

Developmental Relationships

For developmental volunteers, a consistent, trusting and mutually satisfying relationship effectively comprised the service to youth, while prescriptive volunteers appeared to value the relationships primarily as means to other outcomes. Not surprisingly, consistent with their role as partner in a mutually constructed and trusting relationship, developmental volunteers were more likely to center their goals on the relationship itself or on issues directly linked to the practice of relationship-building, such as having the youth develop a sense of trust or belief in the adult's caring and committed presence.

Being There

Developmental volunteers frequently expressed concern that the loss of a parent meant that their young partner had also lost or had experienced an increased need for a sense of connection and acceptance, and reassurance that adult support would be consistently available. A paramount goal for 26 of the 54 developmental volunteers (compared to four of the 28 who were prescriptive) was, thus, simply to maintain a steady presence:

I think I just wanted him to see that there is some stability in his life. I don't think there had been, you know, somebody he could talk to, somebody he could lean on, you know, be somebody you depend on. (Match 31.BB)

[My goal was] just to learn more about the person and try to develop the trust . . . [and be someone] that he could count on any time, whether he'd done something terrible or he does something fantastic. (Match 45.BB)

I see myself as someone who's there to support her, you know, to provide her with support, whether it be emotional or whatever. And that's a key element of friendship to me . . . [and give her] the feeling that she's important to someone . . . she doesn't get a lot of attention. (Match 23.BS)

[I wanted him to get out of it] that somebody [out] there cares for him and that somebody is out there that has a different value system, yet still accepts him for what he is. (Match 46.BB)

Some of these developmental volunteers were particularly cognizant of the toll a repeatedly absent or inconsistent parent could take on a young person's ability to trust. For these volunteers, garnering the youth's trust was an important goal in itself. As one volunteer explained:

The only thing that I really try to sway him against is when he comes at me with this: "I don't trust anybody." I try to tell him . . . give somebody a break. I said, you didn't trust me when you first saw me, right? And now [you think] I'm [okay] . . . If he has mistrust, I feel that it's from adult men. Because they are the ones that have pooped on him all his life, and maybe I come in the picture and maybe he sees that all big guys aren't bad, you know? And maybe--in feeling that he can actually have a good time and trust and relate to a big guy--maybe he can relate to more people. (Match 64.BB)

Building Self-Esteem

Developmental volunteers frequently spoke of a concern that their young partners would translate a parent's absence or issues of abuse or neglect into self-deprecation, as this volunteer described:

What I wanted to try to accomplish--not only could I meet somebody and make a friendship--but to try just to make sure he understands that hey, you're not a bad kid. You know, it's not a reflection [on you]--your father leaving--it's not your fault your father's not here, you know; it was your father's own choice . . . because when somebody abandons you, you think well, okay, if I was this way or if I was that way he wouldn't have left . . . so [my Little Brother] right now is, emotionally he has a way to go. Sometimes I don't think his self-confidence is what it should be. (Match 41.BB)

Contributing to youth's self-esteem was a primary targeted goal for 21 developmental adults. (By comparison, it was a primary goal of three prescriptive volunteers.) These adults shared a belief that nurturance of self-esteem--in the form of frequent expressions of confidence or more concrete support--must be a clear priority in youth development. As these developmental adults related:

I've attended his open houses at school and met his teachers. If he's got a concert in the chorus or something like that--and his dad does not do that--and I guess I always, you know, the feeling that I had growing up was if your dad, you know, my dad was proud of me, you know, whether I was on a sports team or in the band, there is no better feeling. And if your dad is proud of you like that . . . then that's just what a lot of kids live for . . . and he doesn't have that at all. At the school where he goes, that's not very common. But I think that's very important. And in terms of a Big Brother, [I'm] out for encouragement and support, then if he's in something, I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna be there to go see it. (Match 82.BB)

One thing I want is I want her to have an improved self-esteem. And I think that's happened. I think she does feel better about herself. I want her to think that there is a good future ahead for her. (Match 27.BS)

Providing Fun and Exposure

The most common primary goal among developmental volunteers (38 of 54, compared with seven of 28 prescriptive volunteers) was to provide youth with exposure to a variety of activities and the opportunity to have simple, straightforward fun. For developmental volunteers, having fun--according to the youth's or a mutual definition--was, first, a key part of the practice of relationship-building. "To get them to where they know that you really care and can be trusted," explained one volunteer, "you just have to spend time with them and do things that they like to do." (Match 16.BS) But developmental volunteers also believed that in offering youth fun, they provided them with valuable opportunities--opportunities that were too often precluded by the economic and social constraints faced by many of the youth's families. Offering youth the chance to be "just a kid" thus constituted an ongoing focus of developmental relationships. As these volunteers described:

I just like to see him get out and smile and get away from his family, and have a good time . . . and do things that he really hasn't done or seen . . . that's enjoyable. Like my caseworker said, he needs to get out and have fun because it's a real tough situation he's in right now, being the father of the house.
(Match 41.BB)

One of the things I want for him is to have the ability to have fun. I think that he lives in such a tough environment and I think that they grow up before their time. And I want him to have fun, to be a kid again. I think he looks forward to that. (Match 51.BB)

It would be misleading, however, to leave unstated that developmental volunteers, like their prescriptive counterparts, attempted to influence their young partners' grades and behavior. While developmental volunteers counted these among their aims, however, they did not--given their perception of an appropriate BB/BS role and its intrinsic limits--see them as primary or exclusive goals. The difference between the two groups of volunteers with regard to influencing their young partners' behavior outside the match was, then, one of both emphasis and--as will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter--style. When developmental volunteers attempted to influence their partner, they first went through a protracted period in which friendship development was the clear priority. Second, they retained their role as supportive friend and maintained a balance between attempts to influence the youth's behavior and their more primary goals of providing a supportive presence and contributing to the youth's self-esteem. For example, when developmental volunteers were faced with a report of school failure or an incident of "trouble," their style and tone in responding generally reflected consideration of the ramifications that an ensuing exchange would hold for the relationship. As the following excerpt illustrates, developmental volunteers tended to choose responses that were protective of the relationship's openness in communication and the youth's trust:

He does confide in me quite a bit. More than I thought he would because . . . there's a lot of trouble and he's got in fights and such and suspended from school . . . [One time] we were just talking and we were over at our house playing basketball and he was having a good time. And then I think sort of in the middle . . . things seemed to sort of go downhill for him. I think he realized in all that [he] may have done something that I may have thought less of him for--I think he got in a fight that time and was suspended. Anyway, I told him that I was in this relationship for a long time and he just broke out and smiled. I think he felt, well I really goofed now--this guy isn't gonna like me, and I just happened to say the right thing. And I really meant it--and I didn't know how to get that across so I just told him, I said, I'd like to, you know, I'm interested to see you when you're 25 years old or something; and he's 15 right now. So that to him, you know, meant probably a lifetime. (Match 45.BB)

In further contrast to prescriptive volunteers, who believed it was an appropriate aspect of their role to reprimand or remonstrate with youth, when developmental volunteers did convey displeasure or concern, they consistently wove strands of compassion, reassurance and acceptance into their reactions. For example, when this volunteer learned that his youth was suspended from school, his concern and displeasure were forthright, but were delivered with understanding:

He's just looking for himself right now and, you know, that's what I told him. I said I can identify with that. I'm not saying you're right, I'm not saying you're wrong. I'm just saying I know where you're coming from. But I'll just tell you in the long run, you're the one that's going to be hurt by this. He needs a lot of strokes. I provide them. I tell him he's a good kid and you're smarter than that. You don't browbeat him, you try to lift him up. (Match 22.BB)

Another recounted:

[When she told me about her bad grades] I didn't wanna be too negative and just, you know, blah, you know, go on to lecture and lecture and lecture. I gave her a good lecture, because I told her about the importance of her education. But it's not something that I totally dwelled on. After the initial lecture thing, you know, I didn't want it to be a negative thing. Then I tried to build on her self-confidence and say I know you can do it, Alicia, you know, you're capable, you're a smart girl, you can do it, you just need to try harder. And then I started working with her on it. (Match 11.BS)

Prescriptive Relationships

The majority of prescriptive volunteers appeared to believe that their intentions could produce readily discernable differences--perhaps an end to detentions or suspensions, and grades increasing by one level--if not within the match's first year, then certainly by its second. Accordingly, they chose to target aspects of the youth's behavior and development that exceed the boundaries of the relationship--for example, performance in academics or sports, and behavior toward teachers, parents or siblings.

Emphasizing Grades and School Performance

The result most commonly sought by prescriptive volunteers (17 of 28, compared with 4 of 54 developmental volunteers) was effecting demonstrable improvements in the youth's school-work. Analysis of the content of these relationships' most frequent conversations and styles of interacting revealed that prescriptive volunteers targeted more of their efforts toward this area of youth development than any other, at times subordinating relationship- and trust-building efforts to the "more important business of getting on" with improving grades. This volunteer, typical of those whose approach was prescriptive, related:

Somehow before this year is out, we've got to figure out how he is gonna do better in school . . . I'm beginning to ease off the social part of it because I think socially there's a lot of things going on for him . . . He's in enough things that get him exposure, so that really ought to be one of the least of my priorities. So I made the decision this year I need to concentrate on what I can do to help him academically. Another year of the kind of grades he's making and it would just be a shame . . . I'm getting to the point now where, you know, I'm as concerned about his grades as I would be [about] my daughter's. Because, I really don't, I mean the only, the only satisfaction that I could ever get out of this is to see him do well [in school] . . . And I told him the other night, I said, you know--I got so angry with him the first time I talked after I saw the grades, I really just blasted him. (Match 49.BB)

In one sense, every volunteer shared this Big Brother's sense of the significance of good grades and his heartfelt concern for his youth's future; in fact, almost all volunteers echoed this adult's keen desire that his young partner do well in school. But what differentiates developmental volunteers from their prescriptive counterparts is the emphasis they placed on academic performance. For the majority of prescriptive volunteers, improvements in grades took clear precedence over all other aspects of youth development except learning to be responsible. One prescriptive volunteer put it this way:

I drive school into his head. That's the biggest [thing]. He gets tired of talking to me. He says, "All right, I know, I know." [But] I'm very big on the fact that education is the most important thing in his life right now. (Match 03.BB)

In practice, this heightened emphasis is what youth in prescriptive matches commonly described as "going on and on." As two of these youth explained:

Kids don't really want to, you know, listen to all that preaching and stuff. And [then it's] like: are you done yet? Can I go now? . . . I wouldn't mind getting some advice on girls, you know, maybe he can share a little bit of his knowledge, you know, before going on . . . [but I can't ask him about girls because] he'd bring up school. I'd probably figure he would say, well, first of all you don't need to be worrying about girls right now, you need to worry about your grades, you know. I'm like, oh brother. (Match 49.LB)

[She gets on my nerves] because she talks a lot . . . [it's] usually about school, you know, I mean I don't wanna hear about it all the time. And sometimes it's that she just talks a lot. It gives me a headache. (Match 37.LS)

Descriptions of interactions like those cited above were repeated throughout interviews with youth matched with prescriptive adults. Analysis of pair member interactions corroborates youth's perceptions that, for their adult partners, improved grades was a goal that overrode all others, and was both beyond negotiation and often emphasized at the sacrifice of other developmental concerns.

Similar to the volunteer cited above who stated that "the only satisfaction I could ever get out of this is to see him do well [in school]," for nine prescriptive volunteers (and only one who was developmental), improved grades was their sole criterion for measuring success. Further, six of these prescriptive adults felt that improvement in youth's grades or behavior was necessary for them to continue in the match. One such volunteer reported:

It's easy for me to fall into the thing, well this is just fun. And say [to my Little Brother] let's go do that, and laugh and have fun and take him home. [But] I say, well did he learn anything today, or am I making any contribution. I say man, I sure didn't. So it could be very easy to just have a friend . . . When I met with [my caseworker] I told her that I just barely found [my Little Brother's] on button, and he's only got one speed and it's slow. He just hasn't done anything on his own at all. And I'm not encouraged by the progress that I've seen to the extent that he has no initiative and no independence to get anything done. On the way over today, I asked him to meet with his counselor between now and when school's out and get a list of every extracurricular activity that his school offers for next year as a seventh-grader. Because he's always talking about doing something, but he never does anything. In fact, that's his modus operandi, he just talks about doin' this and talks about doing that. But he doesn't do anything. (Match 36.BB)

Not surprisingly, prescriptive volunteers viewed the provision or sharing of fun as less intrinsically valuable to the youth and less of a priority than did developmental volunteers. Both

prescriptive and developmental volunteers held and acted on the belief that providing and sharing in fun laid a foundation for a developing relationship. Both types of volunteers noted that shared fun establishes the adult's reliability and demonstrates commitment to the child and match. However, by the time of the follow-up interviews, this similarity had diminished significantly. Prescriptive adults, like the volunteer in the preceding excerpt, tended to see providing youth with recreation and fun as investments. Once the period of relationship-building was over, many appeared to expect repayment in the form of improved behavior and grades or demonstrations of "hard work":

We've done all the fun stuff, you know, and now he's getting to be a young man, he needs to be responsible. And these are the things that I refuse to let him slide by in. And I'm just not gonna let him slide. That's just the way I feel about it. (Match 25.BB)

Fun is the reward for doing the right things in school and the right things at home. When he's not doing well in school, the task is you bring your math book, your pencil, your pad . . . I'm probably not as patient nor as kind as his regular teacher, but we get it done. He understands that. And when he's doing well, the reward for those things are the fun things. And even if he's doing well, for every fun thing there is a work thing that we do . . . I think it's real important that he understand that the fun things in life come as a result of hard work. And whether that hard work is in the classroom or, during the summer, physical, it's just a lesson that he needs to learn. (Match 38.BB)

This volunteer's young partner described their interactions this way:

Youth: He would make me feel kind of bad, you know, like at times. I had a bad grade in school, you know, he'd tell me you get a bad grade, all them trips that I paid that money for, you're gonna have to owe me back.

Interviewer: Would he say that you couldn't do anything fun until you did better?

Youth: Yeah, like say we go bowling and all of them fun activities like go putt-putt or play football, he said those are privileges. If you get a bad grade, you can't do no more fun things.

Interviewer: So going out and fun stuff, those are privileges?

Youth: Yeah, he says those are privileges to me. Because he says, if I'm gonna have a Little Brother I ain't gonna have a lazy one. I'm gonna have one that likes to work hard. (Match 38.LB)

Instilling the Values of Responsibility and Hard Work

Like the volunteer cited earlier, a second predominant goal of prescriptive adults (13 of 28, compared with 2 of 54 developmental volunteers) was to instill in youth such values as responsibility, reciprocity and hard work. While the systematic, rigorous analysis of all youth's backgrounds is beyond the scope of this study, a review of case notes did suggest that when developmental volunteers viewed a similar set of youth circumstances and assessed their needs, they concluded that those most pressing were for esteem support and "a safety valve" through recreation. By contrast, when prescriptive volunteers reflected on their youth's life history and circumstances, they were more likely to note, and then attribute youth's difficulties to, a critical absence of proper instruction in the values of hard work and responsibility. What seemed to stand out for these prescriptive volunteers, then, was less the deficiencies present in the youth's environment, and more--particularly in terms of morals and values--those present in the youth themselves--deficiencies prescriptive volunteers frequently sought to rectify. In the words of one prescriptive volunteer:

He's in a tough environment, you know . . . I'm pretty motivated and his environment is a more lazy environment that he comes from. I mean they all live there and none of 'em hardly work half the time, you know. And so to me that's a negative environment . . . My goal is for him to not be a lazy person, okay, to be responsible and respected . . . the whole purpose of getting into Big Brothers is, you know, here's a young boy that needs a male role model and that's my job--is to teach him what I think I would do if I had a son, you know. And I mean like to be honest with you, a son of mine at his age would be way ahead of where he's at, you know. Because he would have learned respectability and respect and things a lot sooner, you know. It would be just like I grew up, with a lot of, more responsibility at an early age. I mean I had a grass-cutting job when I was seven years old, you know, but that was something I wanted to do, and I learned from it. But he's not ever worked a day in his life. And [my Little Brother] just started learning and I think, to be honest, probably when he met me in some things he's learned since we've met. I mean he was a good boy when I met him, but I just don't think a lot of those things have ever really been ingrained in his head . . . (Match 25.BB)

SUMMARY

Data analysis revealed that developmental and prescriptive volunteers' aims and approaches were distinct. Developmental adults approached youth primarily as adult friends, centering goals on developing a friendship that crossed gaps in age, built the youth's trust, and provided the type of support conveyed by a consistent connection with an empathetic adult--e.g., a sense of self-worth or the security that assistance was available.

By contrast, the majority of prescriptive volunteers sought transformation, aiming to engineer changes in youth's values or habits, skills or accomplishments. While the focus of develop-

mental relationships was on the whole child and his or her overall development, prescriptive matches focused more narrowly on the youth's performance. A smaller group of prescriptive volunteers sought roles that appeared friendship-based; but in concepts of mutual responsibility and feedback, these were more appropriate to adult-to-adult relationships.

Further, whether volunteers elected to take a primarily developmental or prescriptive approach played a key role in shaping the relationship that developed between the two partners. The goals or developmental issues volunteers chose to emphasize affected the type of activities the two undertook and the nature of the pair's negotiations as they chose how to spend their time. Similarly, the role a volunteer assumed--whether as supportive confidante who aimed to convey a sense of unconditional acceptance, or as an authority who strove to regulate values and behavior--acted powerfully to set the tone and terms of a relationship's most common communications and interactions. These relationship "nuts and bolts"--the content of the pairs' activities and communications, and their characteristic patterns of speech and interaction--are the focus of the next chapter.

IV. PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

In this chapter, we delve into the inner workings of the relationships that developed as volunteers sought to concretize their aims. Specifically, the chapter provides an analysis of the patterns of interaction that constituted developmental and prescriptive relationships; documents the contents of their most common activities and communications; and analyzes the processes through which these BB/BS relationships developed, sustained or declined.

A particular focus of the chapter is on the youth's perception of the relationship and response to the volunteer. Because youth responded to the relationship groundwork set by adults with choices of their own--such as to disclose or withhold, to participate wholeheartedly or with reluctance--youth's responses were integral to the nature of the relationships that formed. Youth's responses influenced the type of conversations that predominated in the relationship, the type of support that was transacted, whether the relationship was marked by cooperation or discord, and, perhaps most critically, how the relationships developed--whether, for example, the adults elicited help-seeking behavior or, conversely, failed to establish a connection that fostered trust.

The two types of relationships followed distinct paths of development and yielded equally distinct results. These pathways are an additional focus of this chapter. While the majority of prescriptive matches (22 of 28) faltered or closed, most developmental relationships (50 of 54) not only persisted, but continued to develop. At the time of our second-round interview (an average of 1.5 years into the match), the majority of youth in developmental relationships sought their adult friend's assistance or accepted their efforts to advise, guide or intervene. In developing to this extent, developmental relationships approximate the type of intensive intervention most youth policymakers agree is necessary for long-term gains for youth (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). Yet, such long-term interventions have rarely been implemented and less frequently assessed; nor have most assessments of mentoring programs (P/PV's included) examined longer-term relationships. For these reasons, this chapter examines closely the status of developmental relationships at the point of our second-round interviews and pays particular attention to the barriers and precursors to relationship development that were evident in this sample.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first describes the types of activities characteristic of both developmental and prescriptive relationships, then presents analyses of the characteristic processes that developmental and prescriptive volunteers used to decide on activities with youth, the effectiveness of these decision-making styles, and their implications for how relationships developed. The second examines the communication patterns characteristic of developmental and prescriptive relationships and explores their effect on how matches developed over time. The findings reported in this chapter are based on both content analysis of interviews, and quantitative analyses of closed-ended questions that tapped key variables in

the youth's response to the intervention, such as perceptions of support provided and decision-making in activities and conversation.⁴

THE PAIRS' ACTIVITIES

All participants were asked about the activities in which they engaged most frequently with their partners. As illustrated in Table 5, with the exceptions of going to the movies and "just hanging out and talking," which developmental matches were more likely to do, differences between the types of activities reported in developmental and prescriptive matches were relatively minor. When they met, pairs in both types of relationships appeared routinely to play sports and games, walk around the mall or shop, and eat at restaurants.

But the similarity in activities across relationship types suggested by these parallel reports is somewhat misleading. First, because so many prescriptive matches met inconsistently and had closed by the second round, the number of times prescriptive matches actually engaged in particular types of activities was considerably fewer. Further, since matches were asked to describe what they did when they met, these figures more accurately reflect the nature of relationships at the time of the initial interview, when owing to caseworker supervision (with its emphasis on activities) and prescriptive volunteers' initial willingness to engage in fun activities, similarities between relationships were at their highest. Perhaps most critically, however, despite the fact that reported activities appear similar, how activities were selected in developmental and prescriptive matches varied considerably.

In seeking to establish a friendship that bridged gaps in age and social power, developmental adults strove to promote the youth's autonomy in choosing activities by providing them a voice in the decision-making process or, if possible, by creating a partnership for choosing activities. This approach was rarely followed by prescriptive volunteers, who tended to keep decision-making to themselves, generally dictating activities rather than soliciting and incorporating the youth's input.

Not surprisingly, as illustrated in Table 6, 44 of the 54 of youth paired with developmental adults reported they felt they had a high level of voice in choosing the relationship's activities; the remaining 10 reported having a medium voice, or partial say. By contrast, only 5 of

⁴ For all 82 matches included in the analysis, at least one interview was completed by each partner in one round of interviewing. Four cases were eliminated from the original sample of 86 because only one member of a pair had been interviewed over the two periods. In 58 (70%) of the cases, full open-ended interviews were conducted with both partners at both points in time. For 75 (91%) of the 82 cases, first-round interviews with both partners were completed and at least one partner completed a second interview at an additional point in time. Thus, every match included in the analysis was represented by an interview from both pair members, and the majority were represented by interviews from both pair members at both points in time. During the second interview, youth were asked closed-ended (multiple-choice) items about key attributes of the relationship. Sixty-seven of 82 youth (82%) completed this segment of the interviews. Of the 15 missing youth, nine were in developmental relationships and six were in prescriptive relationships. Any individual item with fewer than 55 cases (67%) reporting was omitted from the analysis.

Table 5

**ACTIVITIES ENGAGED IN SOMETIMES OR PRETTY OFTEN,
BY RELATIONSHIP TYPE**

ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF YOUTH RESPONDING	% MATCHES REPORTING	
		Developmental	Prescriptive
Walk around the mall	66	73	62
Go to the movies	66	76	43
Play sports	64	58	37
Biking, hiking, skating	64	58	48
Just hang out and talk	56	90	67
Watch TV or sports	58	63	35
Go to Big's house	64	82	70
Play games	64	56	38
Eat at a restaurant	64	96	91

Table 6

**YOUTH'S SENSE OF VOICE IN CHOOSING ACTIVITIES,
BY RELATIONSHIP TYPE**

DEGREE OF VOICE	NUMBER OF MATCHES	
	Developmental	Prescriptive
High	44	5
Medium	10	11
Low	0	12
Total	54	28

NOTE: Youth's sense of voice in choosing activities is a composite measure, combining content analysis of interviews, with measures of the youth's perception that the volunteer seeks the youth's input, responds when it is offered, is interested in what the youth likes to do, and works with the youth "like a partner" to decide activities.

the 28 youth matched with prescriptive volunteers felt they had a high level of voice; 12 youth reported that they had little voice in deciding activities; and the remaining 11 reported having partial say. Further, while the majority of youth matched with developmental volunteers felt that their adult partners valued or considered their preferences for activities all or most of the time, most youth in prescriptive matches reported wishing their adult partners would solicit their ideas or listen to their suggestions more often.

These key themes in the decision-making styles characteristic of developmental and prescriptive matches are detailed in the following sections.

Developmental Relationships

Our data analyses clearly indicate that developmental volunteers value youth input--and express this in both speech and action. The strategies developmental volunteers used to incorporate their young partners in the decision-making process and to elicit their preferences were wide-ranging, but almost all evidenced a core set of key, effective approaches. Developmental volunteers facilitated the youth's participation by providing reassurance that they were interested in what youth like to do; by presenting smaller, more manageable decision-making steps; and by listening with interest to and acting on the types of things youth like to do--i.e., by having fun. Other hallmarks of developmental relationships were negotiating until a mutual agreement was reached whenever a disagreement or a need to set limits arose, and refraining from "pushing" youth to participate in "good for them" activities without prior discussion, notice and consent.

In describing why they felt that youth participation in the relationships' decision-making was valuable, developmental volunteers reported believing, first, that gaining decision-making skills is key to positive youth development and, second, that shared decision-making assists a relationship in developing and strengthening over time. As this volunteer explained:

[One of my goals is to] bring her into the decision-making and participation in the relationship . . . to help her realize that she can make decisions. (Match 23.BS)

Soliciting Youth's Ideas

While including youth in the decision-making process appears at first to be a relatively simple task, providing youth with a sense of voice in a relationship with an adult who is typically distant in age, experience and socioeconomic circumstance proved complex. Many youth--particularly those under the age of 12--were unable to generate ideas when directly asked, perhaps reflecting a limited frame of reference. As one youth said: "I try to come up with things, but I usually don't have such good ideas." Other youth reported that their hesitancy to generate suggestions "on the spot" stemmed from a concern that to do so would appear "rude," as if the youth might be asking too much:

Well, I never have said where I wanna go . . . she makes plans for the day, and she asks if I wanna go there, and I can't say no because I think that would be sort of rude to say, no, I don't wanna go there. (Match 59.LS)

Well, I think, you know, that she should be able to [decide]. She has the money and everything and, you know, I don't want to, I don't like to depend on people, like borrowing and all that stuff. (Match 39.LS)

As developmental volunteers responded to youth's reticence, they maintained a clear awareness that from the youth's perspective and position in the relationship, to voice preferences or request activities from an unknown, unrelated adult was to cross a not insignificant gap. As one developmental adult explained when asked about a nonresponsive youth:

I [would] just have to go about being myself and not treating him like a kid. If I'm treating him like a kid, he's gonna get--kids are, you know, they wanna be treated like you, as a friend, not as somebody that you are babysitting. So you know, I guess I try to analyze myself a little bit to see, you know, what am I doing. Am I causing this? Am I not treating him as an equal? Am I not doing the things that he wants to do, you know, unless it's throwing eggs at houses or something . . . but you know, am I not being the way, am I not making it easy for him? (Match 47.BB)

In attempting to make voicing preferences easier for youth, developmental volunteers often stressed to youth that their role in decision-making was important:

When he can't [decide], I suggest, but then every time I drop him off, I ask him, did you have fun? Because if you didn't, we'll do something else. (Match 04.BB)

I don't care [what we do] but it has to be okay with [my Little Brother]--'cause he's sort of the boss and these outing are for him. (Match 45.BB)

Many developmental volunteers described their difficulty in learning what youth wanted to do when the youth themselves were unable to articulate what they enjoyed. This was particularly problematic when week-to-week considerations of time and cost made it unfeasible to engage youth in the expensive "sure bet" activities of going to amusement parks and arcades, playing miniature golf and riding in go-carts. As one volunteer matched with a reticent youth recounted:

You know, we've gone to the children's museum. We went on a trip once with the [BB/BS agency to an amusement park]. So sometimes I just have him over to my house for dinner or just to goof off, something like that . . . We try to do a variety of things, and I try to make sure, you know, that it's something he's gonna enjoy. And I think early on, we actually sat down and he made out

a list of some things that he thought would be fun to do. I found that was helpful for me because that took some of the pressure off of me, you know, trying to say well, jeez, what am I gonna do, what would a 10-year-old kid like to do, what are we gonna do this week. But kids are so creative, if you just put his mind to work. And he came up with a big list of more than 20 things, no problem. (Match 43.BB)

Many other developmental volunteers also found having the youth make a list to be a valuable strategy, in both providing the relationship with a resource to assist partners when they were at a loss for an idea, and symbolically serving to remind the youth that the adult cared about the youth's preferences, and was committed to a relationship where the youth's voice was valued. As another developmental volunteer described:

How I dealt with it, and it kind of fixed it, was . . . we sat down with some index cards and I said, okay, let's make an idea file, so the next time that we are stuck, we'll just flip through it, and then we'll pick something. So we just brainstormed together and just made index cards. And we never actually used them, but it was the exercise, I think, that was helpful. (Match 58.LS)

The most common strategy developmental volunteers used with reticent youth was to propose a range of choices:

Most of the time, he wasn't really that forthcoming with ideas of what to do. We'd sort of negotiate, but it was more of me throwing out ideas and him either giving it the thumbs up or the thumbs down. (Match 01.BB)

Sometimes we go back and forth: oh you decide, no you decide--that type of thing. But I usually like him to decide because this is more for him than for me as far as I'm concerned. So I, you know, I usually ask him what he wants to do and if he can't come up with something, I give him suggestions. (Match 04.BB)

Having choices laid out for them was a method of deciding activities that youth appreciated. As one prescriptive youth, whose volunteer rarely offered choices, explained:

Well, I never have said where I wanna go, that's the only thing I don't like. Because she makes plans for the day, and I don't make plans for the day and that's just not fair for me . . . But one time we were gonna go to the museum and I didn't wanna go to the museum, I wanted to go--because [this one time] she was saying to the mall or to the museum--and I said I'd rather go to the mall. That's the only time I really said where I wanna go. (Match 34.LS)

Adults who gave youth a circumscribed set of choices made continuing efforts to reassure their young partners that their enjoyment and participation in decision-making mattered, despite the fact that the adult partner played the leading role in choosing activities:

On occasion I've said, you know, if you want to do something just let me know and we can do other things too. (Match 78.BB)

Not surprisingly, this youth perceived his adult volunteer as valuing his input and respecting his choices, and appreciated even those activities that the adult played the primary role in choosing:

I can suggest whatever and we'll usually do that, but I don't have too many ideas . . . usually he'll have something planned, and he'll see if it sounds good to me and usually it sounds fine and we just do that . . . because everything he has planned is always fun and he usually thinks of things that are real fun. (Match 78.LB)

The key to effectiveness in laying out a range of options was, of course, ensuring that the choices were youth-focused--that is, that youth would enjoy the activities. Youth reported doubting the commitment and what they referred to as the "fairness" of adults who not only offered few options, but gave little consideration to what youth called the "type of things kids like." As one volunteer described, developmental adults were often able to determine options that might capture youth's interest simply by listening:

At the beginning, in the feeling-out stage, [it was like what] do you like to do, what don't you like to do, and just run through suggestions and listen. And I think listening is the key. If you find out that he talks a lot about hockey, well let's see if we can get to it. Around here . . . hockey games are nearly impossible to get into, but maybe we'd go over [to another town] and get a hockey game there or something. Or try and find places you can ice skate or, you know, if it's something that I can learn. But listening to see what kinds of things he talks a lot about. And if he talks a lot about these martial arts things or video games or something like that, you know, think about what kinds of things you can do with video games or with something that he tends to like a lot of, you know, where there's still interaction between the two of you. (Match 47.BB)

Some developmental volunteers provided other opportunities for their youth to practice decision-making by integrating smaller, less daunting decisions throughout their shared time. One volunteer noted, "In the discussions and sometimes [when] we play, you know, we play football together, and in those cases, a lot of times he'd dictate how we would play--would we have a catch, or would we play tackle, or that kind of thing." (Match 01.BB)

Finally, a number of developmental volunteers, on discovering a favorite or cherished activity, would opt to engage in it repeatedly with their young partners. These activities--whether shooting baskets, walking around the mall, riding bikes or going to the health club--tended to involve both partners actively and to be of minimal cost. Although these activities are not typically thought of as being educational or providing exposure, they satisfied the primary criteria for choosing activities effectively--providing fun and giving the youth a sense of voice. As one volunteer recounted:

We kind of tripped onto the exercise thing, so we found the thing that was easier and that we both liked. She really likes to swim. She thought that was great--we got a place to go! So, that opened up a lot and we'd goof around in the pool, and we'd end up talking in the pool and she'd show me that she could do handstands and dives and things. So that was something where she felt like she was in her own environment, maybe where she could really show off and she really enjoyed doing that. That kind of brought out a lot in the relationship, I think. (Match 65.BS)

Respecting the Value of Fun

Developmental volunteers also expressed, then consistently acted on an interest in providing their young partners with fun experiences. Regardless of whether the "fun" activity resulted from a rare unprompted suggestion from the youth, a youth's choice from among a range of adult-presented options, or an adult's idea alone, youth appeared to feel a sense of voice in deciding the content of the pairs' shared time as long as that activity was perceived as fun. Although not all youth in developmental relationships were able to be full partners in decision-making, nearly all who answered closed-ended questions reported that their partner took them to places they really wanted to go all or some of the time (97%, as opposed to 65% of youth in prescriptive matches); and that their partner thought of or proposed activities that were really "fun" (84%, compared to 38% of youth in matches with prescriptive volunteers).

From an adult perspective, fun might appear trivial--particularly in light of the scope and scale of unmet, pressing needs often present in the lives of youth at risk. But as experienced by these relatively needy youth, having fun and sharing it with an attentive adult appeared to carry great weight and a meaning beyond a recreational outlet, a chance to "blow off steam," or an opportunity to play.

Some developmental adults said that they provided opportunities for fun and recreation for their own sakes as well. However, analysis of life history data for this sample of youth suggests that these volunteers isolated and targeted a real need. As the following interview excerpts illustrate, opportunities for play appeared to be constrained for many of the youth in this study:

[My mom] doesn't usually stay at our house, she usually stays with her boyfriend. So it's like, you know, what did you have kids for if you're not going

to pay any attention to 'em or whatever? . . . [But] I just say, hey, my mom can do what she wants, I can stay home by myself, it don't really matter. I don't have very many people who stay with me. So I'm usually home by myself now . . . I used to go home, stay in my room, watch TV all day and never do nothing. And then when I started seeing [my Big Sister], it's like, I don't know, I just changed. I like doing things now . . . when we used to go once a week, we used to always go out and have fun and it's like my friends always told me how much fun they had. You know, it's like, you know, I never got to do those kinds of things. (Match 42.LS)

I get out of my neighborhood now and get to go places . . . I probably didn't see any movies before I had him, and then I've seen about 100 movies now, which is fun because I was never in a movie [theater] before. That was exciting . . . He's kind of made it easier for me to get around to places, so I'm not stuck up in the house all the time when no one's home or anything. (Match 41.LB)

Many youth conveyed a sense of feeling trapped in their home or neighborhood, and described situations where the constraints associated with age and poverty made it difficult to find diversions or escape tense situations. As the preceding excerpts attest, some of this is attributable to a straightforward absence of recreational opportunities, where such circumstances as restricted budgets or parents' employment in multiple jobs limit activities other than television-watching or the diversions of the street. For youth whose home and neighborhood situations appear most volatile, the need for diversions seems to be heightened. Youth who reported living under such circumstances expressed particularly strong appreciation for the opportunity to get away and enjoy relaxed times with their adult friend. As these youth described:

[What's been good about having a Big Sister is] . . . just getting out of my neighborhood, I feel a lot safer. I feel a lot safer downtown than I do where I live, so it's just getting away. (Match 66.LB)

Going away on the weekends, going over, getting away from my mom.
(Match 16.LS)

Youth: When he'd come get me, [that's why I know I have a friend].

Interviewer: 'Cause he comes to get you?

Youth: Mm hm. Especially like, he was there when my granddaddy died.

Interviewer: What happened then?

Youth: My granddad was in the hospital and something in his stomach had bust and he had died.

Interviewer: And what did your Big Brother do?

Youth: He cheered me up.

Interviewer: He cheered you up, how did he do that?

Youth: He had come to get me that same day. (Match 51.LB)

Simply having an adult friend with whom to share favored activities was what the majority of youth pointed to when asked what was most helpful about having a Big Brother or Big Sister. Youth's descriptions of the ways their adult partners were helpful and meaningful to them suggest that what is important is not only the opportunity to break monotony or escape a tense home situation, but to do so with an attentive adult. Data suggest that this shared recreational time with an adult friend carries a meaning beyond the chance to "blow off steam." Many youth describe lives where activities shared with adults--beyond occasional TV-watching or domestic tasks--were rare, if not missing altogether:

Oh, it's fun 'cause I never really had a sister. It's fun, it's someone that, you know, you can do things with besides your mother . . . well I don't really do anything with my mother because we have like two separate, you know, things. She goes to work, I go to school, she comes home and, you know, we're just there. We don't do anything. So this really gives me a chance to do something with somebody I, you know, really like and everything. (Match 65.LS)

[He's been most helpful] 'cause he just take me places on the weekend . . . and by doing what my father never done, [which is] come see me most every weekend. (Match 22.LB)

It's nice to have somebody to go with, you know, when my mom's working, and, you know, a man, nice to have somebody to talk with . . . and it's more, see I see him more than I even do my real father. I've been out more with [my Big Brother] than I have with my dad, my real dad, in probably the last five years. One time I thought was really nice is my father called earlier in the week, said he was going to call me during the weekend so I could come up, and I was going to go up there at the weekend, but he never called. And me and [my Big Brother] got to go out. So it was nice, you know, to be able to still go off somewhere. (Match 64.LB)

[My Big Sister is different from my mom] because she's not always going some place and [she's] not always having to go out--like come home from her first job, then go to her second job. (Match 19.LS)

Youth appeared to interpret adults' sharing and interest in their enjoyment or fun as caring in a more global sense. As the following quote illustrates, youth in developmental relationships regularly associated adults' quite specific caring about fun with specific caring for the youth: "Well, she takes care of me, she does a lot for me and she wants to make sure that I be safe and have a good time." (Match 19.LS) While this youth perceived the volunteer's involvement as broad caring, the volunteer reported that the relationship had few goals beyond companionship and having fun, and that weekly or bimonthly outings were devoted exclusively to skating, singing, dancing and movies--activities in which conversations contained "not a whole lot" of confiding, but more laughing and "just having fun."

This suggests that youth extract emotional support--what some social support theorists describe as a "felt" sense of security--from fun-based, developmental relationships (Sandler, Miller, Short and Wolchick, 1989; Bretherton, 1985). Forty-four of the 54 youth in developmental relationships spoke of their adult partners as someone who is generally "there for me"--defined as someone whom the youth feel could be approached when in need (that is, who would neither blame nor criticize them excessively) and who would be consistently available and willing to help. Similar reports were far less frequent from youth in prescriptive matches (6 of 28). Yet actual instances where volunteers actively assisted youth with some difficulty in their lives occurred in only 12 of the 54 developmental cases.

Finally, the data suggest that youth experience an enhanced sense of self-worth when their adult partners not only pay them persistent, positive attention but also join them willingly in activities the youth describe as fun. As one youth explained when asked to reflect on the benefits having a Big Brother or Big Sister could hold for young people:

Youth: I think everybody needs a Big Brother or a Big Sister. I think it changes their life a whole lot for the better.

Interviewer: How do you think it changed your life?

Youth: With having someone that I know that cares about me or that would rather, you know, have fun with like going somewhere with me or, you know, have fun being with me, then I think a whole lot of people would feel better about their self and, you know, be more confident in their self. (Match 42.LS)

Our research did not employ the type of psychometric measures necessary to do more than suggest that the practice of having fun with an adult translates into something of more enduring developmental significance, such as enhanced self-esteem. However, theory on self-concept development supports the benefits to self-esteem that our data suggest. In her pivotal 1990 work on the development of self-representation in youth, Susan Harter applied, with positive results, a theory of the developing self-concept as a looking glass (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934). This theory contends that "an important task of childhood is to coordinate the collective opinions of others into . . . an inferred judgment that comes to represent the self."

First imprinted on the looking glass of the child's growing self-concept, then, the treatment and attitudes of others become a key part of that youth's understanding and opinion of him- or herself. Applied to the BB/BS context, this theory suggests that what is conveyed when the volunteer pays consistent attention to the youth is a sense of being worthy of that attention. Further, when the adult joins the youth in "youthful" activities, what is conveyed may be acceptance of who the youth is and his or her developmental level.

Negotiating and Setting Limits

While they focused primarily on fun activities, and incorporated the youth's voice as an established part of the pairs' decision-making, all developmental adults in our study negotiated activities or set limits for the youth at some point, particularly as relationships developed. In fact, for many youth in developmental relationships--particularly those over the age of 13--negotiations were a valued aspect of the relationship, signaling, when successful, the presence of mutuality and equality in the relationship. As one youth described his relationship's partner-like style of making decisions:

We both decide things. Like if I wanna do something, he'll say okay and if he wanna do something, I'll either say yes or no, or I don't like that or something. But we never turn each other down . . . nothing never came between us to not work out so well, we've been always working out things together, really nothing's been bothering us. (Match 06.LB)

Or as another explained when asked whether she and her Big Sister worked together like partners:

That's the best thing right there . . . because like if I want to do something and she'll wanna do something else, like I'll say okay we'll do yours this weekend, then she'll say okay, we can do yours next week. We compromise, that's the best word for it, we compromise . . . and we both always end up having fun. (Match 13.LS)

As developmental relationships progressed, the majority of youth grew sufficiently comfortable to request activities. The preferences youth voiced could be extravagant, including frequent trips to amusement parks and adventure centers they had seen advertised on TV or heard about from their friends. And even more modest requests--for movies, video arcades or restaurants--could exceed volunteers' ability to pay, particularly when made week after week.

For the most part, developmental volunteers took extravagant requests in stride, interpreting them as typical for youth to request and particularly understandable for youth who experience economic deprivation. As one volunteer said:

He wants the extreme, he wants to buy everything. He thinks I'm rich, which, compared to him, I am. But he expects, doesn't expect, but he asks me for a

lot of things and I'll always tell him no. But that's kids, you know, I'm not worried about that. It's no big deal. (Match 51.BB)

This volunteer's practice was to negotiate with his youth until they found something that, while less costly, was still to the youth's liking; thus, the youth perceived both that his voice was a factor in determining activities, and that the two experienced mutual enjoyment of shared time. As a discussion between this youth and his interviewer revealed:

Youth: I really get to go anywhere I wanna go, because he asks me. Every time I see him--"where do you wanna go?"

Interviewer: So you usually decide where you're gonna go?

Youth: Really I let him decide. [But] sometimes . . . like when I ask him, I ask him did he wanna go to Marketplace today, he said yeah. And it's a certain game that me and him like, Terminator, me and him like that game . . . [Sometimes] like when I think that's nice or he thinks that's nice, [it's] not good enough--like it's too far or we don't have time and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay, then he'll suggest some place else to go?

Youth: Yup.

Interviewer: Is it usually some place that you wanna go or it's not some place you wanna go?

Youth: Some place I wanna go. (Match 51.LB)

Further, this volunteer set clear limits on the amount of money that was going to be spent:

At [an adventure center], after we went down there and did everything he wanted, I spent \$50 easily. So last time we went, I told him, here's \$20, that's it. And he brought some of his own money, so that added to it. We went to play video games and again the same thing--you can spend \$5 or \$6, [which] is not a lot of money, but I don't want him to think that every time he gets anything he wants, so I restrict it. I think last Friday night it was \$4 and I told him that, and he understands that, and so he'll take his time and work with that. (Match 51.BB)

This developmental volunteer was not alone in setting limits on spending. Several adults expressed that the clear articulation of limits was, in fact, important to maintaining a balance of power between the adult and youth:

I think it's important to set a budget and to be as up-front about what kind of money there is to spend, rather than it being sort of a vague thing. Because then you're kind of pulling strings a little bit and the kid's like, well you bought me popcorn last time. What's the deal here? Why isn't it forthcoming now? . . . I mean, I think there has to be some kind of rationale behind the money that's spent or something that they can sort of grab onto and understand rather than just kind of--I don't want it to be totally ambiguous. (Match 69.BB)

I don't have a lot of money, but I try to . . . make it real clear that I'm not gonna buy her something everywhere we go, so she never expects it. (Match 21.BS)

The investment that developmental volunteers made in their relationships--in drawing youth out, in supporting them in taking on a partnership role, and in recognizing and acting on the importance of fun--appeared to pay off in the harmony of ongoing interactions, despite the clear articulation of limits. As will be described more fully in the next section, while developmental volunteers accomplished such negotiations with relative ease, prescriptive volunteers encountered what they described as sullenness, stubbornness or resistance when they set limits.

Incorporating More "Serious" Activities

There is evidence in this research, corroborated by P/PV's studies of mentoring in other contexts, that developmental volunteers' early focus on youth's choices of fun and special activities contributes to the development of relationships in which fun can be had in a broader scope of activities--including mundane errands or chores--and can lead to more "serious" intervention, such as working on school projects or taking the time to have a "safe-sex" talk. Several volunteers whose matches had met for over a year described their situations thus:

I think actually I find that it seems like lately, it almost seems like we can do less and still have a lot of fun . . . Just thinking of another instance now where we went out to breakfast one day, and then I needed to go to the hardware store and so I took him with me, and I was afraid that he'd be real bored and--I mean, he loved it. He was like, wow, tell me something you need and I'll go find it. So it almost became like a game--just like walking around the store and seeing all the stuff that they had. So that was really like just doing something that I needed to do, but yet we could be together and he got a kick out of it. (Match 36.BB)

I'd say [we work on homework] on the average, maybe every two to three weeks. It's not something to do every time because, quite frankly, I get sick of it too . . . [When we meet] I usually let him give his input, and then depending on what our schedule is that day, I can . . . kind of work with him a little bit.

It's like, [we] get a negotiating [thing going]--we'll do homework for a half hour if we can play football for a half hour. Back and forth, and so (laughter). (Match 05.BB)

A couple of times I asked her if she wanted to go to the art fair [and she said] nah, I don't want any art. I just kind of, you know, backed off. But one day I'll hit it and she'll be more receptive, and then maybe we'll run down to the art fair (laughter). (Match 13.BS)

Later, this latter pair did go to the art fair--an activity, in fact, that the youth reported enjoying.

A number of developmental volunteers were able to make school-specific or more broadly educational activities part of the relationship's habits. Despite the high level of emphasis prescriptive volunteers placed on influencing educational performance, developmental volunteers were, in fact, able to engage youth in educational activities, such as doing homework, practicing mathematics through games, or improving literacy skills, far more frequently and on a more consistent basis over time.

Because youth education is so salient an issue to those involved in youth programming and policy, we conducted a separate analysis of developmental relationships that regularly incorporated educational activities. Because the results of this analysis are based on only 17 cases, however, they are best viewed as providing direction for further inquiry.

The practices characteristic of the 17 volunteers in these cases differed little from those of the larger group of developmental adults of which they were a part. They chose activities that focused on youth enjoyment, extended effort toward including youth in decision-making, kept fun activities a primary focus throughout the relationship, and introduced educational activities only after these key components of effective interaction were well-established. As these volunteers reported:

I wouldn't want to do it in the first year of the relationship . . . just the library, and then Burger King, and then go home. I don't think that's fair to him. I just didn't think it was the right way to start off, especially if he's got behavioral problems and doesn't like school, and then on weekends I cart him off to the library. I don't think that's fun . . . and it's one of my original objectives to let the kid be a kid again . . . I think I can do it now, because we've been together longer and I think he understands I'm trying to help. (Match 51.BB)

Well, we talk about [the importance of getting through school] once in a while without really sounding like I'm a preacher. I tell him someday you're gonna have to find a job that you can be happy with and have some of your own money . . . but we don't dwell on it. (Match 45.BB)

One volunteer described how more fun activities led him to the realization that his youth needed help in a very serious area--literacy:

One of the clues that I didn't recognize right away is when you go to open up a menu in a restaurant, if we went to Perkins or something, he'd usually order what I did. And then one time we stopped at a store, K-Mart, and he was gonna get a birthday card for a lady he calls his grandma. And he wanted me to read the card. You know, he [read] the happy birthday but [nothing] on the inside. And I said well you pick out the card, and he said no, read it. And I said no, I'm not gonna read it. He said please (laughter). And so I read it. And then I got to thinking, well maybe that might be a problem, with the reading. Then I think maybe I asked him if it would help, [and] if he would mind if we read together. And [he said] not at all, you know, so we started reading. I got some books at the library by his house and I got sport books--and Zena Garrison, the tennis player. And so we read that book from cover to cover, a little at a time though. It took about three weeks. You know, we'd read about 20 minutes and he'd read a paragraph and I'd read a paragraph. And so we read a little bit. And once again, I give him credit, because it's not easy to share your shortcomings with a person. (Match 45.BB)

As they incorporated learning-focused activities into the relationships, a number of developmental volunteers described broaching the subject with an emphasis on esteem support and encouragement, and intentionally avoiding negative criticism or admonition. As several volunteers explained:

[When he told me about a bad grade] I kind of focused on his other grades first, he said that he had done a good job with the other ones. And then I asked him if he wanted to do better in it, and then I kind of asked him how he could do better. And it was a pretty simple thing because he just didn't do a couple reports. So we decided that, you know, the next ones he got I would help him with them if he wanted. And we did that twice. You know, so it's like what can we do together to do this . . . When I came home with even a B or even an A-, sometimes it would be well why did you get a minus here. It wasn't like, oh you did great. So I was sensitive to that. (Match 47.BB)

[When I found out about a failing grade], I just said that's too bad. And I asked if there was any way I could help . . . [working on education] is just stressing its importance, and then complimenting him, just trying to pick him up if he feels down. (Match 45.BB)

Two aspects of these volunteers' approach--providing feedback that is predominantly positive and offering concrete assistance--were cited by youth as means of responding that they appreciated and that prompted them to continue seeking their adult friend's help. When the part-

ners shared schoolwork or educational activities, interactions were consistently characterized by volunteers displaying support and encouragement. As several youth related:

[Well, I got an F, and] he said man, you got any problems, you come to me and I'll help you with your schoolwork . . . [and] we'll we talk about it, and then we keep sittin' there talking and stuff and it just makes me feel better. (Match 22.LB)

Interviewer: Was there ever a time that really let you know that [your Big Sister] was your friend?

Youth: Especially when I did my maps in social studies, because she . . . helped me do my map because I couldn't see it on the page real good. And she took my page and she put a typing piece of paper on it, and she clipped it with a paper clip on top of the page and she laid it down right on top of it and I traced it. And she gave me some markers, pencils and stuff. And every time I had a map, she took me over her house and every time I had a report--not every time--but when I had a report, she took me over her dorm and we typed it. (Match 81.LS)

These reports sharply contrast with those of youth in prescriptive matches, who reported that volunteers reacted to a failing grade or lagging learning with disappointment, presenting in the tone and content of their response what youth perceived as criticism, and some described as making them feel "small" or "kind of stupid." Further, despite their vehemence, prescriptive volunteers were less likely than developmental adults to offer the occasional concrete assistance. And since their attempts to assist youth with school or learning were not consistently interspersed with fun activities of the youth's choosing, youth seemed to resent that they were a primary, constant focus of shared time.

A critical aspect of the assistance with school and learning provided by developmental volunteers was that such sessions were kept brief and never became the primary focus of the relationship. As one volunteer described:

Around finals I'll help her, [but] I don't stress it. I mean that's not what I'm here for, you know, I'm not here to be, like, do your homework. (Match 09.BS)

Not all youth in these 17 relationships actively sought to engage in school or learning-focused activities with their partners; some, in fact, told their interviewers that they would prefer "to leave the homework out of it." But this reluctance in no way altered youth's positive feelings for their adult friend and the relationship, nor did it affect their desire for the match to continue. Further, the youth reported that schoolwork sessions were not forced, but negotiated, and involved interactions where the youth felt neither criticized nor shamed, but instead felt encouraged, accepted and assisted. This suggests that once effective patterns are in place, and

as long as they remain ongoing, developmental relationships can absorb a margin of the youth's disappointment as more "good for them" activities are added to the mix.

Finally, a broader segment of developmental volunteers reported that they routinely wove educational activities into the ongoing fabric of their relationships. These activities included adding scores in games, playing Monopoly, and reading road signs or historical markers. While chosen by the volunteer for their educational value, these were not generally perceived by youth as being the less fun "school stuff." As two volunteers described this:

We'll go through little mathematical exercise-type deals, only he doesn't really know [what] they are. We'll, you know, say what is this times this, or you know, like real times--real-life applications, like well, there's 6 percent sales tax; well, what's six divided by 100; you know, just going through little things like that with him. (Match 47.BB)

Well, when she asks me certain questions I'll say well, you know, now in order to answer these questions, you know, we need to do addition and subtraction. Bowling--bowling is a great way to teach addition. You've got to count the pins and add the scores. (Match 23.BS)

Or as another volunteer elaborated when she reported that one of the goals of the relationship was skill-building:

Well, being involved in the relationship itself is a skill, I think, so I think we've learned a lot from each other on that, and had to to have a good relationship. And there's some other things I teach her. Sometimes we'll sit down and do schoolwork together. And sometimes we'll get a new game, and we'll figure out together the rules and how to play it. And we've done a little bit of banking . . . (Match 27.BS)

Prescriptive Relationships

While the decision-making styles of developmental relationships showed a marked consistency, the styles of prescriptive volunteers were quite diverse. Five prescriptive volunteers (all of whose primary frustration centered on the youth's inability to articulate and reassure the adult of the relationship's meaning) approached decision-making on activities with an interest in fun and sharing-based intent that was more characteristic of developmental adults--at least while they met with their youth consistently. A number of other prescriptive volunteers demonstrated multiple problem patterns--for example, volunteers who pushed activities despite youth's reluctance also tended to ignore the youth's suggestions, even when planning to have a fun activity.

Negotiations on the choice of activities were notably absent in the majority of prescriptive relationships and, in some cases, were discouraged outright. Youth and volunteers in 16 of the 28 prescriptive relationships reported that "pushing" was a predominant pattern. Most of the volunteers pushed youth to engage in "good for them" activities, such as schoolwork or "character-building" exercises like cleaning. A smaller number pushed youth into conversations, prohibiting or disparaging youth's preferences for activities on the basis that difficulty-oriented talk was a more "true" foundation for a relationship than shared activity.

In addition, a sizable portion of adults in prescriptive relationships did not solicit youth's views; nor did youth in these matches feel they had a voice in their relationships. In 14 of the 28 prescriptive matches, youth reported that volunteers failed either to elicit their preferences or to listen when they were stated.

Not surprisingly, most (23 of 28) youth in prescriptive relationships reported feeling only a low or partial sense of voice in choosing activities, while the remaining five felt they had a high level of say. Further, on closed-ended questions, only 40 percent reported that their adult friend seemed excited about doing what the youth wanted (compared with 80% in developmental relationships); 38 percent felt their adult friend proposed activities that were really fun (compared with 84% of matches with developmental adults). And 65 percent felt they got to go places they wanted to, while fully 97 percent of youth in developmental matches reported similarly.

The predominant decision-making patterns of prescriptive relationships--ignoring youth's requests, pushing youth to engage in activities or conversations they were reluctant to pursue, and misinterpreting youth's reticence as disinterest--are the focus of the following sections.

Pushing Activities

The fact that the majority of prescriptive adults did not seek youth's input in choosing activities caused little tension early in the relationships--when volunteers were more likely to incorporate "fun" as part of a strategy for relationship-building. However, once they felt it was time to move on to more learning- and improvement-oriented activities--or corrective-focused conversation--their style became more insistent. They often remained undeterred from this approach even when the youth's response was to resist or even withdraw. In essence, when prescriptive adults believed a type of activity or conversation would benefit the youth, they left the youth little choice but to comply:

I used to bring him here and have him help do things around the house . . . he seemed not to be, at first, happy with it, but got very bored . . . but I would make him do it and that was it. (Match 03.BB)

Youth: When I went out with my [Big Brother] he . . . said okay, let's go get the library card and let's go to the library and check out a book. But I stayed at that library all day and he kept coming back, and telling me I

didn't have the right information. So I studied there until closing time in the library. I was sitting there doing a report on toads and frogs, and when he came back, I had my report done, but I didn't have a rough draft. So like I wrote word for word out of the book; he said that's cheatin'.

Interviewer: He said that's cheating?

Youth: I just sat that there and dropped in tears.

Interviewer: You started crying?

Youth: I mean it's something that I just can't hold them in . . .

Interviewer: What upset you about that?

Youth: I don't know. I didn't wanna stay there, I felt like I was supposed to write the report in my own words. Like some of it I got out of the book and some of it came out of my own head . . . I had to do it over.

Interviewer: You had to do it over?

Youth: Yeah, and he picked me up from the library and it was raining. (Match 38.LB)

Not surprisingly, a few young people in these relationships found the adults' pushing distressing, partly because prescriptive volunteers at times pushed blindly on sensitive areas or sore spots--such as school performance. When his Big Brother got angry about his grades, the youth who spent a day at the library reported:

Sometime when I want to get together with him or something like that, and I actually make like a bad grade on a test or something, he just blows his lid . . . [and] he kind of like makes me feel sad that I'm doing bad . . . I know it ticks him off, but I mean like I try to improve. (Match 38.LB)

Not all youth found their partner's style as distressing as this youth cited, however. Instances where youth felt distressed, cried or felt under attack were reported to us in only nine of the 28 cases, and within these relationships, multiple occurrences of this type were rare.

Nevertheless, in second-round interviews, most volunteers in these matches reported making increased attempts to insist that youth engage in activities volunteers believed to be more beneficial. Youth's reports confirmed this increase in their adult partners' tendency to control activities--citing cases in which adults overrode youth's requests or made no attempt to obtain the youth's consent for an activity. All these youth indicated that they wished the adult

would find a different style of interacting and establish a new means of decision-making. As one youth explained when asked what, if anything, he would like to change about his Big Brother:

I'd change like maybe do more stuff that I wanted to do . . . we've done a lot of fun things together, but like he never really asks me what I really want to do. And if he does, and then I tell him, he goes, "oh, we can't do that." And sometimes it's just like when I want to go to the park or something he's like, "well I have something better to do . . ." He'll try to push me into doing stuff, and I wish he wouldn't do that. (Match 36.LB)

In addition, six prescriptive volunteers pushed for conversation to take the place of activities. For these volunteers, conversation appeared to be the only "true" or "real" basis for friendship. As the following quote illustrates, the type of conversation sometimes expected by these adults involved a degree of disclosure and a sustained interchange that P/PV's prior mentoring research indicates might be beyond the developmental level of the youth involved, four of whom were 12 and under:

Some of her acting out, I think, with me is just by not talking. I'll say, well, what've you been doing. Nothing. Well, how is it. Fine. And I'll say, well, Allison, I'm wondering--I'm asking you these questions because I'm merely interested. I said, I don't ask you these things to hear myself talk. I said, I want to know what's happening with you and how things are going and--and then she'll--I mean one time, she knew I was angry, and then it was like a totally different person. Oh I went to a school there, and I did this and I did that, I know, blah, blah, blah.

We've had a few occasions like that. There was one time that she really was having a hard time, and she surprised me, because I had kind of decided that if things don't work tonight, we're going to have to talk about it. And I don't know if she was just overwhelmed at home or what . . . but that's the one and only time she's ever shared much of anything that's going on with her. And so I thought, well, we've made progress. This is great. This is what it's supposed to be. And then after that, it's like this wall there again and you can't get through it. (Match 07.BS)

Youth reported feeling uncomfortable with the adults' pressure to converse in this manner. They appeared both confused and unable to produce disclosure in the form or frequency their adult partners desired. The youth paired with the adult just quoted reported:

I mean I like her and stuff but she's like too old and it's like I'm trapped sometimes. I feel like I'm hanging on a wire or something . . . [she's] always talk[ing] about my grades and stuff . . . It feels weird, you know, like my mom or something . . . (Match 07.LS)

Ignoring Youth's Preferences

For 14 of the 28 prescriptive volunteers, the approach to deciding an activity seemed marked by a tendency to either ignore the requests youth voiced or fail to actively solicit the youth's ideas:

Sometimes I talk to her and she totally ignores me. [And] see I don't know why. I just go, you wanna go do something? And she just ignores me, and I ask her if she wants to go do something that I wanna do, and usually she says no. (Match 29.LS)

Some of these volunteers appeared to be unaware that their young partner felt ignored when activities were being planned, or failed to recognize that the youth might be waiting to be drawn out. As the partner of the above-cited child who felt ignored reported:

If I know I've got something planned where I can involve [my Little Sister], especially like on a weekend, you know, I'll call and say, "I'm gonna do this," and, you know, I have this planned and you're more than welcome to join us if you want. And most of the time she's "yeah, I want to," you know. But I always say if you'd like to do something, you know, whatever you'd like to do, you know, I'm open for suggestions. And if she has an idea, you know, we'll do it. But basically she's always "Oh, whatever you wanna do." (Match 29.BS)

As one youth conveyed:

I was about to talk and he starts talking, says "how about going [to this place]," so I don't ever really have a chance to say where I wanted to go or anything. And then I say all right. (Match 33.LB)

For other volunteers, ignoring youth was more deliberate. In some cases, it was part of a stated philosophy against giving too much money or control to youth. As one volunteer described:

I have real strong opinions on the way people as parents and adults should spend time with kids. And it's not a money issue, it shouldn't be a money issue or how much you do that cost a lot, it should be time together, and so I know that in some way, I might let [my Little Sister] down a little bit. (Match 35.BS)

Her young partner described the adult's decision-making style thus:

We normally just go to her house and, um, watch shows and sometimes get videos or something . . . nothing much, I mean she took me to a movie once,

but other than that we basically go to her house . . . [And] I normally don't ever ask, you know, she'll just be like, you know, and she won't ask me, well, what would you like to do this weekend? She just, you know, she makes her decision. (Match 35.LS)

Youth in these relationships stated clearly how they would prefer their adult partners to interact with them. When asked what she thought Big Sisters and Big Brothers should do to do a "good job," one youth told her interviewer: "They should ask their Little Brothers and Sisters would you like to go this place or that place . . . check in with your Little Sister first--something like that." (Match 18.LS)

Misinterpreting Youth's Reticence

A number of prescriptive volunteers misinterpreted youth's reticence as a sign of indifference or a lack of interest, rather than as understandable hesitancy in an unknown situation:

Interviewer: Has anything surprised you about how your relationship has developed?

Volunteer: Just the fact that she's being so quiet and she has no ambition. It's kind of like--I don't know what to call it--ambition I guess is the closest word I can think of. You know, it's like she doesn't wanna do anything, you know, she doesn't care what she does or where she's at . . . I've tried all kinds of things and I just can't--it's like, you know, sitting a rock in a chair next to you and saying, okay, would you like to watch TV tonight. No answer. Would you like to go shopping. No answer . . . There's just no response . . . I think the world of her, but I just don't know what to do with her now. (Match 14.BS)

Oh, I will sit and ask him question after question and if it's a closed-ended question, I'll get a yes or no, and if it's an open-end question, usually I'll get I don't know. And I'll tell him that's not the answer (laughter). Sometimes, really I have a real tough time, and I work with a lot of kids and I feel like I can get through to most of them, but boy I'm having a hard time with him, getting him to talk. Real difficult . . . it doesn't feel like it's getting any easier and I kind of feel just lately--I'm sure I'm taking it wrong--but I kind of feel like he doesn't appreciate, you know, me taking him places and doing things because he won't say anything and I know that's wrong. I know that he does because I can tell he gets a little bit excited when I call and talk about doing things . . . Not the last time we'd been together but the time before that, I laid it on the line with him. I said look, if you don't wanna [have this relationship with me], I said that's fine and I'm not going to like you any less. But he said, no, no, I want to. (Match 62.BB)

As a group, prescriptive volunteers appear to have had difficulty accepting some of the terms intrinsic to programmatically facilitated relationships involving partners of different ages--which, given the developmental lags and specific needs inherent in youth of this age, are inevitably uneven. Prescriptive volunteers struggled with the activity basis of the program, failing at times to accept the importance of fun and recreational activities to youth; to take primary responsibility for maintaining regular meetings; or to accept that verbal interaction and direct, demonstrative feedback from the youth may be quite limited. This may partly explain why seven prescriptive volunteers, at times, interpreted youth's requests for fun activities or desire for a fun or activity-based relationship as attempts to "freeload" or to "use" the volunteer for purposes other than establishing a relationship. The types of requests or preferences that developmental volunteers tended to view as normal, these prescriptive volunteers judged as inappropriate or ungrateful:

Sometimes he wants a lot of things from me in terms of financial giving and not emotional giving and he'll rather go play video games than sit down and talk sometimes, or you know, let's not talk, let's go do something, let's go have fun . . . I don't know if I'm not spending enough time with him, but [I question whether] his attitude about me is that I'm just somebody that will take him out for a good time. (Match 03.BB)

This is the bad part, but this is the part about being a kid, is he only wants to use me for what he wants to use me for, you know what I mean? It's not a true friendship like, you know, like two kids have for each other or two adults have for each other, you know, it's more like, well, you're a big adult and you're my friend but, you know, really this is what I wanna do, this is what I wanna do, and this is what I wanna do, you know. (Match 25.BB)

I am being used and kicked in the face. And she's old enough to know better. She tends to think I am just a way to amuse herself and that's probably been the biggest difficulty in our relationship. It's not what I really had hoped or wanted it to be. [I wanted] to just develop a relationship with her that she would communicate and feel like I'm a friend more than someone to use. (Match 07.BS)

PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION

How pair members communicated--what they talked about, at what length, and, perhaps most crucially, in what tone or style--was as significant to a relationship's effectiveness as were the pair's practices for deciding activities. In fact, the communication patterns established early in a match's life were key to the relationship's development over time--for example, how volunteers responded to youth's reticence, and the style they later used when youth did "open up" served to either promote or inhibit ongoing disclosure. Further, since conversation was a key mechanism through which support was transacted, patterns in verbal exchange affected the level, the type and the effectiveness of support provided in the relationship. Through

positive communication, self-esteem was reinforced. Youth could "puzzle out" dilemmas or conflicts; could take "air time" to vent the stresses associated with adolescence's normal challenge, and those heightened by being at risk; and could solicit information on coping more effectively with such challenges.

All participating youth were asked to identify the topics that arose most frequently in conversation. Generally, youth in developmental and prescriptive relationships identified similar topics. For example, 93 percent of youth in developmental matches and 90 percent of those in prescriptive matches reported talking about school-related topics sometimes or pretty often; and 44 percent of developmental and 40 percent of prescriptive matches sometimes or pretty often spoke about boyfriends or girlfriends. Differences did arise, however, in the degree of emphasis placed on particular subjects. When asked whether the pair discussed fun things the two might do together, 74 percent of developmental youth reported this was a topic of conversation sometimes or pretty often, while only 29 percent of those in prescriptive matches reported similarly. And when youth were asked to identify the topic that most predominated in conversations, 65 percent of prescriptive youth identified school-related issues, while only 47 percent of developmental youth did so.

Further, questions concerning which partner in the relationship controlled what topics were selected and pursued revealed marked differences. Parity in the control of conversation was far more frequent in developmental relationships: these youth reported initiating discussion about one-third of the time, with their Big Brother or Big Sister doing so an additional one-third of the time, and both partners introducing topics in the remaining time spent in conversation. Youth in prescriptive matches, on the other hand, reported that their adult partners were more than twice as likely as they to introduce topics. These youth reported that prescriptive adults controlled the topic of conversation 63 percent of the time, while youth did so only 26 percent of the time; youth in these matches further reported that both partners introduced the subject of conversation only 11 percent of the time.

Overall, youth's sense of "voice and choice" in topics of conversation and style of communication was measured by combining and cross-referencing their responses to closed-end questions with results from content analysis of interviews to construct a composite measurement. In figures highly consistent with those reflecting youth's sense of voice in deciding activities, this measure revealed that 81 percent of youth in developmental relationships reported a high sense of voice and choice in what was discussed, while only 14 percent of youth in prescriptive matches reported this degree of participation in determining the relationship's talk. Further, while only 19 percent of youth in developmental matches reported a partial sense of voice and choice in conversation, 46 percent of prescriptive youth reported similarly; and while no youth in developmental matches reported a low sense of participation or control in conversation, fully 39 percent of their prescriptive counterparts did so.

These statistics demonstrate that the distribution by relationship type of youth's sense of "voice and choice" in communication--i.e., having a say in determining the topics, the length and the frequency of conversation--was similar to that found for youth's feelings of "voice

and choice" in deciding activities. Developmental volunteers respected the limits youth placed on how much and how often they chose to reveal themselves, expending considerable effort to garner the youth's trust and ease their reticence. As a result, these volunteers were able over time to increase discussions intended to mediate the youth's behaviors and attitudes.

In most prescriptive relationships, however, this general pattern was reversed. As was the case with activities, pushing for disclosure was the characteristic style of prescriptive volunteers. Further, youth in prescriptive relationships demonstrated a pattern of concern that the volunteer would respond by "blowing up"--that a youth's hesitant mention of an issue would mushroom into an ongoing lecture or extended probing into issues the youth regarded as private. Not surprisingly, many youth in these relationships--often after initial attempts to air difficulties--switched from help-seeking behaviors to behaviors that appear self-shielding: e.g., dodging conversations about problems, hiding report cards and family difficulties, and, in some cases, lying.

These key patterns of communication are the focus of the following sections, which first address the styles of communication characteristic of developmental relationships, then describe those styles demonstrated by prescriptive matches.

Developmental Relationships

The majority of youth in developmental relationships (48 of 54) reported feeling they could express themselves freely without concern that they would incur a response that made them feel significantly uncomfortable or penalized by the more powerful adult. This partly reflects the youth's trust that confidences would remain unbroken; more important, it reflects a sense, commonly expressed by youth in developmental relationships, that they could vent, complain and share potentially embarrassing topics with assurance that their adult partner would listen attentively, respond uncritically, advise in ways that didn't belittle, and follow the youth's cues as to how long and in what depth they wished to explore an issue.

Accepting Youth's Reticence

Developmental volunteers accepted a child's shyness and reluctance to talk, especially about difficult-to-reveal issues, such as problems in school or at home. These volunteers were careful not to push youth to discuss issues that they felt either were too personal or might potentially endanger the adult's approval:

I knew that it was gonna take her some time to loosen up, and you just can't force somebody to trust you . . . you can't force somebody not to be shy, you have to just wait. (Match 58.BS)

I think he's still a bit shy in telling me things about, I don't know, I could see him possibly talking to me about things like with his dad, but the thing I keep remembering is that, you know, when I was 12, that was hard to talk about. I

mean it's hard enough to talk about it now, let alone then. And I don't want to put that kind of pressure on him. (Match 75.BB)

He's a very quiet boy, and so he doesn't say a great deal about what's close to him. Only once in the year have we had what I would consider to be a conversation that he was a little more open about himself. It's not you don't have conversations about things that are serious . . . he did talk about his father some [but] not too much, he's just very quiet . . . My own opinion is that's not a great surprise to me, that a 10-year-old boy would take almost a year to start talking about things like that, I mean at least a quiet one . . . He definitely more routinely talks about personal things--I don't mean great traumatic problems, but he will mention his father or something like that from time to time. Neither one of us are idle chat people. We may well get in the car to drive home and not say anything till we get there. And I consider that to be perfectly natural (laughter), as does he. (Match 73.BB)

The majority of youth in developmental relationships (40 of 54) made confiding in their adult friend a regular practice by the time of the second round of interviews--on average, about 18 months into the relationship. However, a sizable portion (14 of 54) nonetheless reported that they generally kept confidences to themselves. Youth's reports indicate that factors of the youth's age, range of support available, and cultural or familial predisposition--in addition to the volunteer's styles of eliciting and supporting disclosure--all acted on the youth's interest and ability in confiding:

It's not that I don't trust her, it's just sometimes I don't have that much problems. (Match 34.LS)

Youth: I'm shy, you know, it's like I feel scared. But I know I shouldn't be but I am, you know. I don't tell her because, I mean it's like I know she could give me advice . . . I know I could, you know, talk to her about anything, just like looking at her and knowing she's right there for me, like I feel better, you know, like she's my friend. But, you know, it's not the same way as like my mother or my brother could, you know, 'cause it's like they know most of my friends and she doesn't. If she knew more of my friends, maybe I could talk more to her.

Interviewer: Like if she knew their personalities?

Youth: Like if she and I and my good friends did something, and she knew the customs. (Match 39.LS)

[I could say it to him but] I'm not into that emotional junk. I'm into playing . . . like fun is my whole life. (Match 04.LB)

Well, you know, I just don't really like talking about myself, you know, I'm just one of those strange people. (Match 54.LS)

I just keep that stuff [a cousin's arrest for selling drugs] to myself. I don't go out and tell nobody my family business; it just stays in the family. (Match 17.LS)

As is true in the general population, youth in the study appear to vary in their styles of communicating and habits of disclosure. Of the 40 youth in developmental relationships who did disclose regularly, 18 opened up only very slowly. However, the rest appeared to confide in their new friend just a few weeks or months into the match:

The first week, I was like real nervous and stuff; I didn't wanna say anything. I'm like I don't wanna say anything. Then like the second and third week and stuff, I was real open to him. Just knowing him better [made me feel like I could]. (Match 69.LB)

I always just talk to her about anything. (Match 42.LS)

By contrast, one volunteer recounted:

It's taken a long time it seems to get her to trust me, to know that I'm not going to tell her mom everything she tells me. You can be honest and open with me. I'd say it took six or seven months and I would say probably seven months into the match when she realized, I can tell her anything. (Match 68.BS)

Or as another volunteer reported 14 months into the relationship:

It really has taken a while for her to show, to demonstrate--and she's really not demonstrative in life--but she has really warmed up in the last few months and that's been just really lovely. She talks a lot more than she used to. And she talks spontaneously now, which really thrills me. And she tells me things spontaneously. It used to be I would always have to initiate the conversation and always ask the questions. And now she really initiates a lot of conversations when we're driving in the car and tells me a lot of things. Like she even told me about a problem at home. (Match 34.BS)

Despite this diversity in the styles and practices of confiding, what consistently distinguished developmental from prescriptive relationships was that the majority of developmental youth--whether they did or not--believed they could confide in the adults. These youth consistently reported believing both that their confidences would be respected, and that the volunteer would not respond in ways that made them uncomfortable, such as by criticizing harshly or lecturing excessively.

Neither the youth's styles of confiding nor the extent to which developmental volunteers filled the role of confidante were consistent. However, one element in the volunteer's approach that was consistent across developmental relationships was that the volunteer not only followed the youth's lead in determining which issues the pair discussed and when, but was also sensitive and responsive to youth's cues that a conversation had become upsetting, felt like badgering or lecturing, or was too emotionally sensitive. This practice of respecting youth's cues extended from relationships where the nature of confidences included only occasional mention of a minor spat with a sibling, to those in which volunteers were primary confidantes on such issues as prior abuse or serious illness in the family. According to several volunteers:

I wait for the invitation [to give her advice on problems or situations]; I'm anxiously awaiting, but (laughter). Once in a while, she'll say, you know, what do I think about something, and I'll tell her. But if she doesn't ask my opinion, I try to keep it to myself. (Match 27.BS)

You can tell sometimes they don't want to talk. She's very good sometimes when you get too close to home, changing the subject. That's what she'll do. And usually when she does that, I just let her do it. (Match 16.BS)

When he doesn't talk and smile very much, then there's something really bugging him . . . [and] I just ask him is something bothering you. [And he says] no. But later, he'll say something later. I say you know you can blow off steam by talking to me if you want to. And he usually will--later. (Match 28.BB)

Establishing Trust

When youth in developmental relationships were asked how they knew whether their adult partner was the "kind of person you can tell things to," many reported that their partner had made explicit statements of reassurance that the youth could confide without fear of judgment or exposure. These youth highly valued such statements:

When I first met him I didn't feel, you know, real, real comfortable talking to him about things. But then once he told me I could talk to him about everything, that made me feel better. I was more comfortable telling him stuff once he told me that. [It felt particularly good having him as a friend] when I had something that I wanted to tell him, and he told me that he wouldn't tell anybody else. That made me feel pretty good 'cause sometimes your friends say stuff like that but they tell people anyway. (Match 40.LB)

Well, one time, we went to a pizza restaurant and we were sitting down and talking and she, you know, she was acting like a sister to me. You know, she told me I could come to her with anything, any problems that I had I could

come and talk to her, you know, about anything, just be open with her, you know. (Match 65.LS)

Developmental volunteers reported making deliberate attempts to reassure youth of their trustworthiness based on their understanding that in a new and novel form of relationship, youth could not know whether and to what extent they could be trusted. As these volunteers related:

I reiterate the point that you can tell me anything, that, you know, it's between you [and me]--I said I'm not like your father, I said, I'm your brother. I said that's on the same level, I said I'm like a big brother to you, like the title goes. And I said I'm gonna steer you away from something that's bad, and I said but I'm not your dad, I'm not gonna punish you. (Match 32.BB)

Like I said, the main thing at first was just gaining trust and that trust that she would confide to me, that was important first. I had to let her know that no matter what, she could tell me anything and I'd believe her and trust her and I'd support her. I think that's what these kids need . . . I think it just takes a long time to build up a trust. And she's always saying things like don't tell my mom and don't tell your boyfriend. And I say, Amanda, what you tell me is between Amanda and me, nobody else's business. (Match 16.BS)

In the context of a relationship that is not only initiated artificially, but also pairs partners whose social power is uneven, trust takes on an added dimension. In seeking to establish trust in their adult friends, youth must ascertain not just that confidences will remain unbroken, but also that the volunteer will not "blow up," criticize or continually bring up or badger the youth about issues disclosed.

Sensitive to this additional challenge to trust, developmental volunteers employed such strategies as "just listening" to youth's divulgences, responding in ways that showed they saw the youth's "side of things," and following the youth's cues as to how frequently, how long and in what depth a sensitive or painful issue was discussed. According to youth's reports, these tactics were also effective in promoting youth's continued, and in some cases stepped up, disclosure.

"Just listening" was the style of responding most common among developmental adults, who said they selected it because they felt it conveyed to youth a sense that they could disclose without penalty, offered them a chance to blow off steam, and was a peer- or friendship-based means of responding as opposed to an authoritarian approach:

He has talked about a teacher who recently gave him a bad grade. So basically, you know, I just kind of like listen to him sort of grouse about this teacher. And in the same sentence, he was saying he was going to clean up his act, too,

because he had been like talking out. So I didn't really, I mean I didn't really add too much. (Match 01.BB)

[If he came to me about an argument with his mother] I would give him a chance to get it off his chest without giving him advice, I would have to hear it first, but I wouldn't take a side, you know. I wouldn't tell him, you were wrong. I would have to hear everything, but I would let him talk it out. He might see where he was wrong. You know, I would just let him get it off his chest. (Match 41.BB)

Similarly, developmental volunteers recognized the importance of what youth call "seeing their side" of things, a way of responding that both conveys empathy and encourages disclosure. The use of this tactic may explain why a higher portion of youth in developmental than in prescriptive relationships reported sharing with their partner things that they might normally keep from adult ears. On closed-ended questions, 68 percent of youth in developmental relationships reported that their partner saw their side of things, while only 26 percent of those matched with prescriptive volunteers indicated similarly. Of the remaining youth in prescriptive matches, 53 percent said their adult friend "kind of" saw their side, and 21 percent said they did not really or did not at all do so, as compared with 23 percent and 9 percent, respectively, of youth in developmental relationships. One developmental volunteer described how he conveyed with his youth:

[If he told me there was a teacher picking on him] . . . I would try to listen to [his] story first and make him know that I believe his story. Because that's important with kids, especially adolescents . . . I think what happens is if you right away say, oh, you know, it's probably because you did this or you might have done that, then they don't think that you're on their side anymore and they put this wall up and forget it. You know, they don't want to tell you another thing. But if you give them the idea that you're in their corner, and even if you don't agree with what they did, you're still in their corner . . . But eventually they'll understand, you know, 99 percent of the time. So first I would check out [my Little Brother's] side of it. (Match 04.BB)

As another Big Brother explained:

I think that[s] probably the only way you can really [talk] with a child . . . 'cause if you always come across as being serious and stern and hardboiled, then you lose something. I think after a while, you lose the child's ability to talk to you, because, you know, you're an adult, you're always thinking these adult things, and you can't come down to their level, you're not down to earth and [they] can't identify with you. So, for me, I think that's the way you have to grasp their attention at first--you tell them these humorous things, and then after that when you have their attention, then you can talk about the more serious reality side of things. Then they're listening, you see. As opposed to,

I can remember as a child, when they would always start in saying, well, this is the case, this is the situation, you ought to do this, I can remember blocking it out. (Match 75.BB)

In describing what youth in developmental relationships valued in their conversations with their Big Brothers or Big Sisters, many pointed to the fact that their adult friend responded to issues brought up by the youth primarily by listening. As one youth explained, "She just lets me talk about it." Youth reported that being able to vent or "talk about anything" with the assurance of empathetic attention provided key, often much-needed emotional support. Indeed, youth's descriptions of the support available to them reveal that for many, support networks are thin:

[And what's been good about having a Big Sister is] well I have someone to talk to, 'cause, like, I have lots of things to tell her about boys and stuff . . . And it's pretty neat to tell your sister things about your boyfriend, and something about your brother, or something about your mom if she made you mad, or if your little sister's being a brat and you don't like her and you're mad or something, it's pretty neat to tell her. (Match 42.LS)

Oh, my god, she's a great listener. I can tell her anything, and she just listens. And you can tell that she's listening and not like she's going, mm hm, mm hm, you know, like, "oh, yeah, what were you saying?" She listens and she goes, I used to do that when I was little. And then like, you know, she tries to say don't worry about it. If you need to call me, call me. And she's like real supporting, so I really like her. (Match 09.LS)

Well, I like it because there ain't no other man around the house and [I like] his personality and what we do and just talking to someone, just having someone to talk to besides your grandma . . . 'cause [before] when I got into fights with people and I didn't have any friends, then I had one, him, I had someone to talk to . . . and he's always been nice and he always listens to me. (Match 46.LB)

Giving Advice

As developmental relationships progressed--as trust was established and the stability of the adult's responses to disclosures was demonstrated--many of the adults did volunteer advice, a change over time toward intervention in the youth's life that parallels the introduction of educationally focused activities into relationships where youth's autonomy and preferences had been well-incorporated. Advice-giving occurred at different times and to varying extents in developmental relationships, reflecting differences in the youth's receptivity, needs and circumstances. While the home lives and support networks of some youth were stable and well-established, the volunteer's advice and information represented support that was relatively rare for many.

Reports from youth and adults indicate that the style of advice-giving was similar across developmental relationships: delivered in terms the youth described as "nice, kind and encouraging," and meted out sparingly. The advice was generally seen as useful--focused on identifying solutions rather than correcting or haranguing youth for getting involved in arguments at home, struggles with teachers, or fights with friends--situations for which youth commonly sought advice.

Many youth in developmental relationships described getting "good ideas" or useful solutions provided by their adult partners:

One time, these three boys at school wanted to fight me, and my Big Brother helped me . . . I forgot what he said, but he told me something that was good . . . and I told my mom and she said it was a good idea, and I told my grandmother and she said it was a good idea, too. (Match 43.LB)

When youth in developmental relationships described what made their partners a good person to talk to and what they valued in their adult friend's responses and advice, many pointed to the volunteer's kindness. Esteem support in the form of praise and encouragement was common in conversations that took place between youth and developmental adults, and was an aspect of support particularly noteworthy to youth:

Every time she tells me you can do good at this or whatever, it makes me feel like she really cares and [that] I can really do it. If she thinks I can do it, I can do it. (Match 42.LS)

[I know I can talk to my Big Brother] 'cause he's always been nice and he always listens to me. (Match 46.LB)

He's really a good person to talk to . . . 'cause he listens . . . [and] see he's a person, like, if I tell him I wanna do something, he encourages me. (Match 45.LB)

During conversations with interviewers about advice-giving or guidance, youth were asked whether their volunteers lectured them, a style of interacting that previous mentoring research indicates decreases their receptivity to the advice, and ultimately works against youth's inclination to reveal problems. The majority of youth in developmental matches (47 of 54) reported that their volunteers did not lecture or, as the following excerpts illustrate, did so in a style different from the lecturing they normally associate with adults:

Yeah, it's not like a parent lecture, so I guess it's cool, it's like you sit there and [your mom's] like bawlin' you out and you're like yeah, you know, you're sittin' there and you're not really listening to her, you're kind of like zoning out, you know. And every time she's like, boom, oh yeah. You just sit there and she's like babbling on, like yeah. But like with [your Big Brother], it's

like when you're talkin' to your friends and they're cranking on you, right, it's like yeah, I know, man, I gotta do this and I gotta get my act together. So it doesn't really bother me. (Match 31.LB)

He doesn't lecture me a lot. We more like goof around and talk about funny stuff. He doesn't give me, like, you shouldn't be doing this or that and the other . . . I think he would probably give me the way a friend would talk to me about it. Like I think he would say like, well, try not to do that again because you might get in trouble, something like that . . . a lecture would be more like treating me like a little kid. (Match 75.LB)

Implicit in these descriptions of developmental adults' style of guidance is that such exchanges are kept relatively short. Keeping advice-giving to a minimum and preventing it from overshadowing other ways of interacting or types of talk was a consistent goal among developmental volunteers:

It's been more of a fun relationship than anything. You know, as far as advising him about anything, you know, maybe there'll be a one-shot advice thing here or there, but it's not anything that we dwell on for anything more than 30 seconds or less . . . not anything [like], "Well, Peter, I really think that this is important and we should really work on it together." (Match 47.BB)

If we're doing something kind of fun, throwing the frisbee, going to a movie or something like that. [I'm more] a friend kinda thing . . . And I'm sensitive enough; I don't want to make this some kind of lecture series: "Saturday afternoon lectures with Joe." (Match 78.BB)

Prescriptive Matches

As noted, a comparison of the communication styles characteristic of developmental and prescriptive volunteers yielded clear contrasts. While developmental volunteers expended considerable effort garnering the youth's trust and easing their reticence, similar efforts were notably absent in the majority of prescriptive matches. And while conversation proceeded smoothly in developmental relationships, according to reports from both youth and adults, the majority of partners in prescriptive matches reported difficulties stemming from either disagreement and tension (15 of 28 matches), or distance and discomfort (9 of 28).

Analysis of volunteers' styles of conversation reveals that prescriptive volunteers pushed youth to disclose, lectured them--often repeatedly--and were prone to criticize youth or point out their errors. Most critically, a sizeable number of youth in prescriptive matches (13 of 28), particularly those matched with volunteers whose approach was transformative, switched from voluntarily disclosing and seeking their partners' help to withdrawing--e.g., by dodging conversations about problems, hiding report cards and family difficulties, or lying outright. Of the remaining prescriptive youth, nine chose more reliable friends or adults as confidantes.

The sections that follow detail these characteristic patterns of conversation in prescriptive matches, which resulted in only four of 28 youth (compared with 40 of 54 in developmental relationships) reporting that they felt consistently comfortable confiding in their adult partner.

Failing to Establish Trust

Youth in prescriptive relationships reported that they generally felt their volunteers could be trusted with secrets. Yet a number of these youth also reported that they were concerned the volunteer would reveal specific confidences to their mothers. Data derived from responses to closed-ended questions reveal that while only 10 percent of youth in developmental matches said they identified with a youth who was worried the adult partner would repeat secrets to a parent, 39 percent of youth in prescriptive matches reported that this was a concern. In their interviews, five youth matched with prescriptive adults described instances in which volunteers had shared a confidence with parents--a practice that all these young people indicated kept them from further confiding in their partner.

A more pressing issue for youth in prescriptive matches, however, was trusting that they could disclose such problems as bad grades; fights at home, in school, or on the street; or family difficulties without incurring the volunteer's disapproval, criticism, anger or even ridicule:

I don't think I'd tell her [about a bad grade because] she'd probably get mad at me and yell at me, and make me feel bad. (Match 37.LS)

Youth: About my grades, they are always saying how good or how bad or how not good or how not bad or stuff like that, about how I'm doing in school.

Interviewer: Does that get on your nerves when they do that?

Youth: Mm hm. Because I usually do really bad in school, and when they talk about it it embarrasses me. (Match 77.LB)

[Mostly we talk about] the way I act in school, like now, why am I so bad in school . . . times like when my mother tells her things that I don't want her to know in school, like I dogged my teachers out and stuff. And, you know, Linda comes back and she's like, your mother told me . . . Oh, God, lady, sometimes she just tells things that I just don't want Linda to know about school. (Match 68.LS)

Youth reported similar feelings about discussing family issues or other close relationships with their adult partners:

Interviewer: Is there anything that you wouldn't want to talk to him about? You don't have to tell me about it, just is there anything that you don't want to talk to him about?

Youth: Certain things. Personal things.

Interviewer: Are they things that you don't want to tell him because you're not sure you can trust him not to tell somebody else?

Youth: I mean he's not going to tell anybody else, but I just, I don't wanna tell him because I'm afraid he'll criticize me. (Match 36.LB)

Well, you know, she's always talking about my mom and I don't, you know, my mom's told me about it and I've told her about it . . . Okay my mom's got a bad back and she can't hardly get up and do stuff. And my Big Sister, you know, would gripe about it. And she don't have a job. And I don't know, she just talks about it. (Match 13.LS)

Badgering, Lecturing and Pushing for Disclosure

Fifteen of the 28 youth in prescriptive matches indicated concern not just about their partner's response in the moment of disclosure, but also over what would ensue during subsequent and ongoing interactions. These youth described feeling that their divulgences did or might get out of their control: that their Big Brothers or Big Sisters badgered them despite the youth's cues that the issues discussed were troubling and emotionally sensitive, or that continued discussion left them feeling criticized:

Interviewer: Did your Big Brother ask about personal things that you didn't want to talk about?

Youth: A lot.

Interviewer: What things didn't you want to talk about?

Youth: Girls--he'd always ask me what I'd be doin'. And he just keeps asking and asking.

Interviewer: Did you tell him you didn't want to talk about it?

Youth: Mm hm, I told him, I said I don't wanna talk about it [and he said] why, what you been doin' [and I said] nothin'. (Match 67.LB)

Interviewer: Boys, you don't wanna talk to her about boys?

Youth: No, because then she was gonna be like asking me a whole gob of questions. But I did tell her the first time I went to my teenage party, though, that was pretty cool.

Interviewer: You told her about that, and did she ask you a whole lot of questions?

Youth: No, she just like freaked out. (Match 68.LS)

As described in Chapter II, volunteers' own reports concerning their styles of interacting with their Little Brothers and Little Sisters corroborate the descriptions made by the young people. These volunteers described: "driving it into his head" (Match 25.BB), "keeping on her and on her and on her" (Match 08.BS), "keep asking her . . . playing 20 questions" (Match 07.BS), and "dragging it out of her" (Match 29.BS). When viewed in the context of these volunteers' goals--and the relatively short time frame they set to realize them--it is perhaps not surprising to find styles of responding that include "badgering," lecturing in conversation, or pushing youth to engage in "serious" discussion. Because volunteers' interactions with youth, and, hence, their opportunities to wield influence, are limited by BB/BSA guidelines, it is primarily through conversation that these adults were able to push their agendas: to wrestle from youth information on the problems they sought to rectify; to impress on them the importance of the changes the volunteers sought; and to seek evidence of the youth's improvements.

Effects on the Youth

Youth's descriptions of their responses to such approaches reveal that prescriptive adults' communication styles were generally counterproductive. Fifteen youth in prescriptive matches reported that their volunteer not only lectured, but did so in a tone and to an extent that made the youth feel uncomfortable, criticized or--as one youth described--"kind of small." On closed-ended questions, 53 percent reported that "when something was bugging them," their Big Brother or Big Sister "got on their nerves because they talked about it too much"; similar reports were seen from only 8 percent of youth in developmental relationships. Further, 58 percent of youth in prescriptive matches said that they didn't like the way their Big Brother or Big Sister made a big deal out of things, compared with 15 percent of those in developmental relationships. And while 34 percent of youth in prescriptive matches reported that the adult sometimes or fairly often brought up things the youth would rather not talk about, only 2 percent of their developmental counterparts reported this experience.

Not surprisingly, reports from both youth and volunteers in 13 prescriptive relationships described a pattern in which youth withdrew from conversation and disclosure:

[There was an ordeal every time his report card came out] . . . I mean it was so bad at one point, he would even try to--he would just pretend he didn't even

get 'em, he wouldn't even mention to me that report cards were out. (Match 38.BB)

I think [talking to friends about school is] better. I feel more comfortable around them talking about that subject. But you know I could've talked to [my Big Brother] about it, too. But I hate [how he would] turn it into a lecture . . . Basically, you know, [my friends] say the same thing, but you know, they put it in a more comfortable way. (Match 49.LB)

Nine youth--seven whose relationships were sufficiently inconsistent that trust remained essentially "unjelled," and two who perceived that their adult partner, while neither too critical nor "pushy," simply didn't listen well--appeared never or very rarely to have attempted engaging their adult partner as a confidante, despite prodding. Instead, these youth reported that when something upset them, they confided in friends or family members who knew them better or were physically close.

In understanding these patterns of withdrawal and a lack of engagement or trust, it is important to remember that of the 28 prescriptive relationships, 22 met only sporadically. Although interviewing pairs at two points in time did not provide close scrutiny of ongoing patterns of meeting, case notes and interviews from inconsistent relationships indicate that youth engineered the pattern of missed meetings in only five cases. And despite the presence of interactions that were termed unsatisfying or unpleasant by the youth, only one prescriptive relationship ended at the request of the youth or the youth's family. Therefore, these factors point to a common context in which youth were unclear about the adult's commitment--whether and when their partner would reappear, and, once an appointment was made, whether the adult would show up.

Reports on four prescriptive relationships revealed communication patterns more characteristic of effective developmental relationships. Youth in these four matches said they trusted that secrets would remain with the volunteer, and that the adult's responses would neither penalize the youth nor cause them discomfort. In each of these matches, youth made the volunteer a primary confidante--remarking to their interviewers that they felt they told the adult "just about everything," and that no other adults in their lives played a similar role:

Like if you get in trouble if you can't talk to your mother . . . you can always go to your Big Brother and work things out, too, 'cause I know he'll listen to me . . . 'cause I can tell when my Big Brother listens to me because he understands what I'm saying. And like we can be face-to-face and he'll say, well, he'd been through it too when he was young. (Match 06.BB)

However, the volunteers in all these matches ultimately ended the relationship: two because the youth became involved in the juvenile justice system; one owing to a long-term pattern of his own inconsistency; and the last because despite the youth's reports that she told her volunteer "just about everything" and that the opportunity to disclose was helpful, meaningful

and relatively rare in her life, the volunteer felt the level of talk remained too distant or mundane.

SUMMARY

Adult consideration of youth's enjoyment and opportunities for shared fun was a mainstay of developmental relationships--those of the types that were most likely to form, endure, prove satisfying to the participants and consistently provide support to the youth. This finding is not unique to the BB/BSA context, but has in fact been corroborated in two of P/PV's four previous mentoring studies--the two whose youth populations and program structures most closely resemble BB/BSA (Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992). These studies found that relationships where adults valued youth's preferences for fun activities were those most likely to persist and garner the partners' satisfaction.

Further, while there is a tendency among policymakers and practitioners to discount the value of fun to youth development, our research indicates that the practice of having fun with youth is both helpful to relationship development and of intrinsic benefit to youth. Since the economic and social circumstances faced by many of BB/BS youth's families appear to seriously limit youth's recreational outlets, volunteers' provisions of fun were valuable opportunities for the youth. Further, since the youth were more likely to trust the intentions and accept the guidance of an adult who provided for and shared in the youth's fun, this research found that fun may create a context for more serious intervention. Perhaps most critically, sharing a chosen or special activity with a caring adult appeared to impart to youth a sense of worth and of being cared for--a type of self-knowledge a consensus of developmental scholars agree is vital to healthy youth development.

Equally critical to developmental relationships--and a major stumbling block for prescriptive matches--was the process partners used in determining activities. Effective decision-making methods for activities promoted the youth's participation or autonomy as a partner in the process. This finding concurs with recent research on the importance of supporting autonomy in early adolescence. Expanding the traditional conception of autonomy in adolescents as independent movement away from relationships with care-giving adults, this research includes consideration of a young person's growing autonomy and power within such relationships (Bryant, 1989). Indeed, our research provides ample documentation of youth's clear wish and often faltering and ineffective struggle to become a partner in decisions with their adult friends--a type of growth that developmental volunteers fully supported.

Similarly, patterns of communication in developmental relationships were characterized by a high degree of youth control, particularly in a relationship's early, tentative phase. Developmental volunteers respected the limits youth placed on how much and how often they chose to reveal themselves, while expending considerable effort to reassure youth of their trustworthiness and reliability as confidantes. By contrast, for many prescriptive volunteers, conversations appeared to represent an important vehicle for impressing their goals and aims on youth. Conversations in these matches thus operated primarily under adult control and frequently

contained lectures, demands for disclosure, and notices of youth's mistakes. Although its intention was clearly the reverse, this style tended to inhibit youth from further disclosing to or seeking advice from volunteers.

Perhaps most crucially, effective decision-making processes allowed adults to move youth, with their consent, beyond a singular focus on fun to an intermittent participation in work or educationally oriented activities. Similarly, developmental volunteers' approaches to talking with youth--listening extensively, responding sparingly and nonjudgmentally, and expressing empathy--were effective in eliciting confidences and requests for and receptivity to advice. By contrast, ineffective decision-making processes--where volunteers pushed youth and ignored their preferences or requests--left youth feeling mistrustful of the adult, disappointed in the relationship, and unlikely to seek or accept the adult's guidance.

V. GENDER AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Research documenting gender differences in childhood and adolescent development has found that topics of conversation and patterns of interaction during play and discretionary time are likely to be very different for girls and boys (Nicholson, 1992). During early adolescence, girls are more likely than boys to be concerned about personal appearance, relationships with parents, emotional stress and sex-related problems (Nicholson, 1992). They are also more likely to have few close friendships--perhaps due to girls' preference for one-to-one interaction and private settings, and to the higher value that they place on intimate conversation and knowledge (Belle, 1989). Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to have a wider circle of friends, possibly due in part to their greater participation in organized sports (Nicholson, 1992).

Developmental differences between white and black youth and among youth at different socioeconomic levels have been less adequately explored. Research findings on adolescent development traditionally have been based primarily on middle-class white children, with poor youth and minority youth receiving little explicit attention. Existing research has largely failed to examine differences in development and resilience among middle-class, working-class and poor white adolescents, and has largely ignored black adolescents (Zaslow and Takanishi, 1993). Thus, existing research generally overlooks how both economic and socio-cultural variables affect minority youth development (Spencer, Swanson and Cunningham, 1991). This paucity of research on poor and minority adolescents has made it difficult for interventions like BB/BSA to extract lessons or guidance on how to tailor their services appropriately to best meet the needs of these youth.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, we identify differences between the 43 male and 39 female matches studied, as a contribution to the research literature on gender differences in adolescence, and as a foundation on which to discuss gender differences in mentoring relationships. Second, we explore differences in the 56 same-race and 26 cross-race matches in the study.

It is essential to note that because the numbers in our study are small, the conclusions presented can be viewed only as suggestive. At a time when BB/BS agencies and newer mentoring programs struggle to decide whether African-American and Latino youth should be matched with white volunteers, or if minority children are best served by matching them with adults of the same ethnic background, these findings can provide a framework for discussing cross-cultural differences in mentoring pairs. However, additional research with larger samples of matches is required to determine definitely whether and what significant gender and ethnic differences exist.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Unlike other mentoring programs P/PV has studied in which female volunteers are more likely than their male counterparts to be in satisfied or sustained relationships (Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994; Styles and Morrow, 1992), findings here indicate that male matches are more likely to be lasting, consistent developmental relationships. Seventy-four percent of the male matches studied (32 of 43 matches) were developmental, compared with 54 percent of female matches (22 of 39). This finding is consistent with both BB/BS agency staffs' impressions and BB/BSA's annual survey of agencies, which indicate that male matches are likely to last longer and report fewer difficulties than female matches.

Girls Have More Problems and Responsibilities

Differences in the female and male matches appear to start with the youth themselves. Interviews with Bigs and Littles and a review of case files indicate that girls are more likely than boys to have responsibilities at home. Ten of the 39 Little Sisters studied were responsible for household duties, such as babysitting and house cleaning, and these responsibilities were, in turn, concerns for the match. Only two of the 43 Little Brothers had comparable duties. We also found that the girls were more likely than the boys to have problems with their mothers, with conflicts typically arising over household responsibilities and curfews. Of the 39 female matches, seven reported problems between the Little Sister and her mother, compared with only one of the 43 male matches. The following is a typical description of a Little Sister's difficulties with her mother:

Like my mom, like I'll wash laundry, I'll wash her clothes and just 'cause I didn't put 'em in the dryer right after they got done, she yells at me. It's like Mom . . . she always gets mad at me and I get sick of her yelling at me. She makes me mad sometimes. So I stay away from home as much as possible.
(Match 42.LS)

The fact that Little Sisters reported problems with their mothers is not surprising, given that agencies report that boys are more likely to be referred to their programs through their mothers because the child lacks an adult male role model, whereas girls are more likely to be referred to the program through the school or another third party because of developmental, emotional or behavioral problems.

Our findings also indicate that girls are more likely to have suffered physical or sexual abuse than boys (12 of the 39 Little Sisters, compared with 5 of the 43 Little Brothers). These findings are consistent with national statistics, which indicate that one in four girls are likely to suffer abuse, compared with one in seven boys. It appears that the girls come to BB/BS relationships with more defined needs than just a positive role model.

Developmental Interactions

Both Big Brothers and Big Sisters in developmental relationships followed the patterns of interaction detailed in Chapters III and IV: the volunteers focused on developing a friendship with the youth by playing less a disciplinary role than that of an equal. The way this "equality" was established, however, varied according to the pair members' gender: female matches were like "girlfriends," focusing on activities that promoted talking and disclosure; male matches were more like "buddies," emphasizing shared activities more strongly than talk.

For example, two Little Sisters told of how sharing information about boyfriends made them feel close to their Big Sisters:

Interviewer: Was there a time that made you feel really good about her . . . that she let you know that she was really your friend?

Youth: She would talk to me, and I would talk to her and tell her about my boyfriends and stuff and she would tell me about hers . . . It's nice to know somebody that you have something in common with them. (Match 10.LS)

I have someone to talk to, 'cause like I have lots of things to tell her about boys and stuff. Because a lot of boys, I have a lot of boy things to tell her about, like about boys I meet and stuff. And it's pretty neat to tell your sister things about your boyfriends. (Match 42.LS)

According to our analysis of interviews with pair members, girls were more likely than boys to talk to their Bigs about subjects typically deemed "personal"--a mother's boyfriend's abusive behavior, sexual activity and contraception. For example, this Big Sister recalled telling her Little Sister about sex:

[My caseworker] asked me if I was willing to talk to her about [birth control and said] it would be good if you could, 'cause [my Little Sister's mother] just won't. And I said, well yeah, I won't have a problem with that, sure, and my roommate at the time was a nurse, so like the first time we get together [my Little Sister] had all these questions and she was talking about sex . . . so my roommate and I just kinda told her everything that can happen . . . diseases and everything that [my roommate] has seen at the hospital, you know. Every gross thing you can imagine. I think it was kinda tense; we ended up laughing a lot during the whole thing, all of us, 'cause none of us, [my Little Sister] didn't know [my roommate] or me and we didn't know her and here we are with this adolescent curious kid and we are telling all this stuff and she was just loving it, you know. It's a little uncomfortable. (Match 63.BS)

Of the 39 female matches studied, 11 talked frequently about personal topics, while three of the 43 male matches did so, although many pairs--male and female alike--addressed such topics occasionally. Further, while male matches talked about family, dating and school as often as did female matches, the frequency and importance of such talk appeared to be greater in female matches. Male matches were more likely to focus their conversations on sports and the activities they would do together. Indeed, a number of male matches expressed comfort or acceptance in not talking. Several Big Brothers spoke of their understanding that their Little Brothers did not wish to talk all of the time:

Neither one of us are idle chat people. We may well get in the car to drive home and not say anything till we get there. And I consider that to be perfectly natural (laughter), as does he. That's back to that [male] stereotype. (Match 73.BB)

I don't think guys--guys don't talk, you know. And I'm not saying it's good, I'm not saying it's bad, they just don't. Like, you know, my best friends, we don't talk, we don't analyze our relationships. It's just best friends, period. We don't. (Match 80.BB)

Other Big Brothers spoke of how the activity itself can become a source of conversation:

[My Little Brother] is, as oftentimes the case with kids, a little quiet, but when we get involved in something, he'll refer to something like, oh this is something like we did in class or this is something like I've done before. And he'll bring up subjects, and then it gives me a chance to say [something] . . . Sometimes just sitting in the car we don't say much. I [say] how's school. Fine. What's Mom doing today? Um, don't know . . . So you run out of conversation and when we get into our events or our programs, it gives a little more chance to communicate. (Match 78.BB)

He's actually pretty quiet. It's funny, because he can shift from being extremely quiet and kind of reticent to just going a mile a minute on a topic . . . I wouldn't say it's easy [for me to talk with him] but it's getting easier. As we have experienced more things together, then we have things to [talk about]-- "Oh, remember we went to the IMAX theater" or "wasn't that the place where we threw the frisbee." (Match 69.BB)

Further, while both Little Brothers and Little Sisters in developmental matches described their interactions as fun, female matches were more likely to find all their interactions fun, including times when the pair was not engaged in a specific activity, but just "hanging out" and "talking or chatting." For example, this Big Sister described how she and her Little Sister had fun listening to the radio on the way to the movies:

You know, music is universal, so if a good song comes on, [I say] oh, I like this song too and we might just start singing or shaking our shoulders. One night we went to the movies and it was pouring rain and a good song came on and we just both sat in the car and we were just dancing till the song was over and then ran into the movies. And that kind of thing is fun. (Match 19.BS)

Male matches expressed similar sentiments, but their happiness seemed to center more on the type or the enjoyment of an activity. As this Big Brother described:

We would play football, and it was just the two of us, but he liked to make it a game, so that . . . when he caught the ball, then I would have to get him. And you know, this one time I like threw him the ball about 10 yards away, or maybe more. So he catches the ball and starts taking off. So I take off after him. And actually a year ago, it was much more easy for me to catch him--he's gotten a lot faster to the point where we play now, I really have to like struggle. But anyway, I threw it to him, he was way out front, he started running and I started to come up from behind him and I could just hear him giggling, just like really, really giggling hard. And I got him from behind and we like went down in a heap and all our limbs are just like flying all over each way, tangled up in each other. And when we got down we were both just like lying on the ground just like really laughing hard for a while, just laying there on the ground. (Match 01.BB)

Both Big Brothers and Big Sisters in developmental relationships expressed satisfaction with being equals, as these two volunteers described:

I really like [my Little Sister] because she's more like a friend, not someone I have to babysit . . . She had to watch her little sister a lot . . . so it's a lot of responsibility, so she's real mature. And she's more like a friend, we talk on the same level. (Match 09.BS)

Well, see I don't even look at him as like a child, I mean it's kind of like he's a buddy now. So it's kind of like, he's like any of my other friends. (Match 31.BB)

Finally, as discussed in Chapter IV, both Big Brothers and Big Sisters in developmental relationships were likely to attempt to contribute to their young partners' self-esteem by demonstrating consistent attention and caring, and praising their youth. Our findings also indicate that Big Sisters were more likely to promote self-esteem by praising their Little Sisters' personal appearance--they told their Little Sisters that they were attractive and worthy of attention. The following matches discussed the Big Sister's approach to helping her Little Sister with her appearance:

A lot of times when I praise her, she's come back different times and said things like, well Mom never said that before or nobody's ever told me that I looked nice before. Or nobody's ever said that my hair looked nice, you know, and when you tell her those things I mean she's kind of like, wow, this is really cool. (Match 14.BS)

Whenever she looks really nice and she does [her hair], I always make sure to compliment her so she knows to do it again. (Match 21.BS)

This emphasis on appearance is an important point, since some research indicates that physical appearance is the largest contributor to adolescents' global self-esteem, and is more directly related to self-esteem among girls than boys (Nicholson, 1992).

Prescriptive Interactions

As detailed in Chapter III, Big Brothers and Big Sisters in prescriptive matches placed greater emphasis on seeing improvements in the youth. Our findings indicate that the intensity of this focus differed by gender. While prescriptive volunteers of both genders emphasized education, male volunteers were more likely to focus on increasing the Little Brother's sense of responsibility, while female volunteers frequently admonished their Little Sisters not to repeat the mistakes of their mothers, older sisters or aunts. The following quote is an example of a Big Brother's focus on responsibility:

We've done all the fun stuff, you know, and now he's getting to be a young man, he needs to be responsible. And these are the things that I refuse to let him slide by in. And I'm not gonna let him slide. That's just the way I feel about it. Those are important things--responsibility, commitment and being polite and courteous . . . All those values, I'm just not gonna slide on it. So we had some friction developed and I asked him to do things and he kind of blew me off for a while. There's all kinds of Big Brothers. Some will just say yeah, I'll take you to a movie. And I'm not saying that's bad. That may be all that they have to offer, you know, where I want there to be more. (Match 25.BB)

Not surprisingly, the child responded by saying that while the most frequent topics of conversation with his Big Brother were manners and responsibility, he "hated" talking about those subjects, and wished they would talk about something else.

In the case of Big Sisters who focused on telling their Little Sisters not to repeat family members' mistakes, the interaction was similar. For example, this Big Sister described the dilemma of always wanting to tell her Little Sister to strive in education, but realizing she might sound "preachy":

To me education's a big, huge thing and I think it's like the biggest problem that we're facing in this country and, you know, it just, it really concerns me that she's gonna be in the same position that her mother is in, in 15 years, if she doesn't get her education and so, because I know that she's not getting it from anywhere else . . . it's kind of a Catch-22 because I don't want to nag her about it . . . I just try to make light of it, you know, and just [say] but you're so smart . . . And the more I try to do things like that because I know I'll probably sound preachy if I don't and that's the last thing a 14-year-old wants to hear. (Match 37.BS)

Her Little Sister's response was to be upset that her Big Sister "griped" about her mother:

My mom's got a bad back and she can't hardly get up and do stuff. And [my Big Sister] would gripe about she don't have a job. And you know, I don't know, she just talks about it. And my mom's working now. (Match 37.LS)

Further, when asked if she would tell her Big Sister about a bad grade, the Little Sister replied:

Well, I don't think I'd tell her [because] she'd probably get mad at me and yell and make me feel bad. (Match 37.LS)

Gender Differences Found in Both Types of Match

Big Sisters in both developmental and prescriptive relationships were more likely than Big Brothers to be frustrated or upset when the youth found it difficult to provide verbal feedback--not a surprising finding given that Big Sister/Little Sister relationships relied more heavily than male matches on conversation to form and maintain their bonds. As this Big Sister explained, conversation defined the relationship for her:

That's been my goal all along is to have a good relationship, where it's fun to be together but you can share. And if she's having a hard time, that she'll talk to me about it and I can talk to her and we can have a more--a deeper relationship. Because she does not want to come over to the house, she doesn't want to bake or do something else--just to come [over to my house]--[she says] we aren't going to go shopping or go to a movie or go do this or go do that . . . Well, I don't feel that that's what I'm there for. I don't mind doing that, but that's not the purpose of the relationship, and I've talked to her about that--but we can't get past that . . . We're to develop where we're friends, and that we can talk and that we can go do things and laugh and have fun even if we're not doing anything. (Match 07.BS)

Ten of the 39 female volunteers--five developmental and five prescriptive--expressed frustration with their Little Sister's unresponsiveness, compared with four of the 43 male volunteers interviewed. Two Big Sisters in developmental matches voiced their frustration thus:

She's just quiet. And after a year, I would think you would start to kind of open up. And it is getting frustrating because I've tried to get her to open up, and I take her to things that I think she's never been to that would really get her talking . . . It's hard to say whether it's going well or not because when someone doesn't really respond back to you, I mean that's kind of the whole essence of a relationship or a friendship. And so I mean it's kind of hard to say. (Match 39.BS)

At first it was [difficult] because she wasn't very good at input . . . I almost quit because it was really frustrating. And it's hard because . . . I work five days a week and I work really long hours and sometimes I work weekends and I have Saturday and Sunday to chill. And one of those weekend days I have to be with this girl who like doesn't talk to me, you know what I mean. And it gets really frustrating, you're like why am I doing this. So you just kind of, you've got to work it through . . . but it was hard, it was frustrating. (Match 58.BS)

These two Big Sisters ultimately took different approaches in dealing with their frustration. The first Big Sister sought intervention from her caseworker; the latter devised an "idea file" in which she and her Little Sister brainstormed about activities they would like to do together and wrote their ideas on index cards. Both of these Big Sisters reported that these strategies helped to diminish their frustrations. While most developmental Big Sisters were able to resolve the lack of feedback through caseworker intervention and/or the adjustment of their expectations, however, prescriptive Big Sisters were likely to struggle with the youth's unresponsiveness throughout the course of the match.

Finally, although equal numbers of Big Brothers and Big Sisters had events in their lives that affected their relationship with the Little Brother or Little Sister--such as returning to school, buying a house or an increase in work hours--Big Brothers were more likely to end their matches if such changes meant that they could not continue in the relationship with the same consistency. Female matches, on the other hand, were more likely to become inconsistent in meeting, causing negative consequences for their Little Sisters. As one youth explained:

Youth: Well, lately she's been getting on my nerves because we don't do nothin' together and I just feel like she's dissing me . . . she don't ever do nothin' with me and it just kind of like aggravates me. We just don't ever do nothin'.

Interviewer: Has she explained why she hasn't come by lately?

Youth: She always tells me it's because of her house. (Match 13.LS)

Although the Little Brothers in closed matches were disappointed to lose their Big Brothers, the reason was made more apparent and thus more clearly understood. Little Sisters, on the other hand, were more likely to interpret the Big Sister's inconsistency as disinterest in meeting with them. Three of these Little Sisters confronted their Big Sisters about the rules of the program--that they were to meet weekly or biweekly--and sought caseworker intervention.

CROSS-RACE MATCHES

Cross-race and same-race matches were almost equally likely to form developmental relationships (73% versus 65%, respectively). However, since our findings concerning cross-race matches were based on only 26 cases, they can be used only to highlight important avenues for further inquiry. A number of themes emerged consistently in cross-race pairs' descriptions of their relationships. Although they faced challenges particular to bridging the social distance created by ethnic differences, most cross-race volunteers proved adept at handling these differences by focusing on the program model--the volunteers provided the child with an outlet for fun, developed a friendship, and avoided pushing "deeper" issues that made them and/or the youth uncomfortable. They were also less likely to display corrective responses, such as a focus on school performance or responsibility--a style of interaction likely to be ineffective.

Almost all volunteers in cross-race matches voiced concern and difficulty about understanding the youth's culture, and questioned their value as role models:

I think I may not be as good a role model for him, I mean when you say you're white, you know, you've got more opportunity. Whereas, you know, I'm black and I don't have as much chance as you, or something like that. I think that may be the most difficult part, I think. He may not look up to me as much, I think, because I'm white. And maybe not, I don't know, I just kind of sense that anyway. (Match 41.BB)

Maybe [my Little Sister] would have felt more comfortable with somebody who grew up in the same setting and understood that type of school life or something, rather than me, who was totally clueless. (Match 30.BS)

Interviewer: And what's been the most difficult and challenging for you in having the relationship?

Volunteer: Being able to identify with her--know where she's coming from. I don't know what it's like to be 13 anymore. I don't know what it's like to grow up on--I don't want to say that side of the tracks, but in that

kind of situation. The black culture is very different, I mean, you have to be aware of that. That kind of stuff. (Match 21.BS)

Still, these volunteers felt that they were learning something from their youth, and that they provided a much needed outlet, as this Big Brother explained:

I [want to provide my Little Brother with] some stability in his life. I mean I don't think he's had too much, just because [of] his family life and his mother's changing jobs a lot and sometimes she works days and sometimes she works nights. And I think it would help him just to have somebody there that's gonna be there and help. Hopefully, I can provide different experiences for him too . . . things like going to a [professional basketball] game or . . . things where he can get out and see what's out there, because he doesn't get to do that much with his family. And simple things, like one of the first times we went out, we just went downtown [to a park] . . . And he'd never been there, and it's just right downtown, he lives just a mile from there, a few miles away from that. So it's just things like getting out and seeing things and knowing what's going on. (Match 44.BB)

Further, the minority youth matched with white volunteers were unanimous in their happiness in the program and saw few, if any, problems being matched with an adult of a different race. As one child said:

Youth: At first, I was scared to come in because I felt like I'd be embarrassed at first, and then I realized that there ain't nothin' to be embarrassed about.

Interviewer: Really, what made you realize that?

Youth: Because I'm used to bein' around whites and blacks and I don't care about the color of the skin, 'cause I think they the same people, so I'm used to it.

Interviewer: That's right, [your Big Brother's] white, right?

Youth: Mm hm.

Interviewer: So what's that like having a white Big Brother?

Youth: It's fine, he seem like a black person. It seem like white people and black people is the same. It's a feelin'--I don't get why people fightin' and killin' over each other 'cause of their skin, I don't get that. (Match 51.LB)

SUMMARY

To date, findings on gender differences across mentoring programs have been inconclusive: while some have found that female matches were more likely to develop lasting, consistent and effective relationships, others demonstrated the reverse. Findings from this research, though representing too small a number to have uncovered significant differences, support the latter finding: 74 percent of male matches in this sample were in developmental relationships, compared with 54 percent of females.

Content analysis of interviews revealed that difficulties and satisfactions described by female matches frequently centered on the pairs' conversations. This finding is not surprising, given that a near-consensus of research on female friendships documents both the centrality of talk in female friendships, and, perhaps most crucially, its singular importance in conveying a sense of intimacy and demonstrating a strong bond. By contrast, significant research shows that males report similar senses of intimacy primarily from joint activity (Tannen, 1990; Maccoby, 1990; Belle, 1989).

At the same time, however, research on mentoring relationships has uncovered an association between a volunteer's emphasis on talk in the content of the relationship--or expectation of talk- or disclosure-based intimacy--and relationships where partners are clearly less satisfied and relationships more sporadic and short-lived (Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992). These trends in research suggest, then, that some of the difficulties experienced by female matches that pair same-sex partners, but of significantly different ages, may be due to practices or expectations that relate to naturally occurring female friendships. However, additional research into the relationship between gender and match effectiveness, with much larger samples, would be needed to confirm this hypothesis and rule out other potential causes.

Interview data indicate that cross-race matches in this sample were as likely to be developmental as those that were same-race. While challenges or concerns linked to racial difference did crop up, they either were resolved, or affected the strength or quality of the match very little. But to extract lessons from this sample--particularly given the small number of black matches with which to compare--would be misleading. Insight into the potential benefits and losses associated with cross-race matches will require additional exploratory research that systematically examines much larger numbers of volunteers and youth.

VI. VOLUNTEER AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The volunteer and youth relationship does not exist in isolation, but is influenced by a number of key relationships that surround the match: relationships between the volunteer and the youth's family, including parents, siblings and cousins; between the caseworker and the participants; and, for many, between the youth and the volunteer's family. The impact of these external relationships on the BB/BS match is an important consideration, particularly given that the home and family situations of many youth matched by BB/BS are characterized by considerable need and turmoil. Further, results from a prior P/PV mentoring study found that the relationship between the volunteer and the youth's family could be a considerable challenge for the volunteer, and that its effective negotiation was both key to a match's stability and integral to the relationship's effectiveness (Styles and Morrow, 1992).

BB/BS volunteers report challenges similar to those described by mentors in other programs, but BB/BSA's approach to volunteer and family relationships is unique. BB/BS agencies require parental involvement at rates higher than most mentoring programs, thereby producing a relatively constant level of interaction between volunteers and youth's families. Families and volunteers also receive a high level of support--the volunteer/family relationship is, in fact, a primary focus of caseworker supervision and, when necessary, intervention.

Further, the BB/BS orientations and trainings we observed systematically recommended volunteer practices similar to those identified in our prior research as facilitating effective relationships with youth's families. These volunteer practices include resisting families' efforts to extract help beyond providing a friendship for the youth; refraining from developing competing relationships among members of the youth's family; and contacting caseworkers when a question of necessary intervention in the family arises.

This chapter explores the specific types of volunteer and family relationships that took shape under BB/BSA. The first section presents findings from an analysis that examines the association between the volunteer/family relationship and the type of volunteer/youth match that developed. Based primarily on analysis of key differences in developmental and prescriptive volunteers' styles of relating to families, the remainder of the chapter examines practices in forming volunteer and family relationships that proceed smoothly and do not impinge on the relationship between the volunteer and youth.

Findings reported in this chapter are based primarily on content analysis of interviews in which participants were asked to characterize their relationships with their partner's family--whether they were distant or close, smooth or marked by tension--and to recount salient interactions. Data from interviews were cross-referenced with caseworker records on volunteer and family relationships, and augmented by youth's responses to closed-ended questions that ascertained whether youth felt comfortable with the degree and nature of the contact between their family and Big Brother or Big Sister.

VOLUNTEER/FAMILY INTERACTIONS AND RELATIONSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

As noted, a volunteer's relationship with a youth's family has been identified in prior research on mentoring as a crucial factor in determining a match's effectiveness--e.g., in having an effect on whether meeting is frequent and long-term, whether a relationship is perceived as meaningful and whether the youth sees the volunteer as a reliable ally (Styles and Morrow, 1992). To test whether volunteer and family relationships that form in the BB/BSA context had a similar bearing on BB/BS matches, reports of volunteer/family difficulties were crossed-tabulated for developmental and prescriptive matches.

It is essential to note that because the number of cases involved in this research is small, the findings from this data cannot be viewed as definitive. To definitely demonstrate whether volunteer/family relationships had a significant effect on volunteer/youth matches would require additional research with a much larger sample. However, our findings do suggest important hypotheses for further investigation.

Prescriptive matches in our study exhibited a far greater likelihood of ongoing volunteer/family difficulties than did developmental relationships. About 48 percent of prescriptive relationships (13 of 27), as compared with only 15 percent of developmental ones (7 of 46), reported difficulties with the youth's family that remained unresolved either at the time of our second interview or at the point the match terminated.⁵

This difference suggests that difficulties in the external volunteer/family relationship may account for some of the difficulties internal to prescriptive matches--e.g., patterns of pair member discontent or sporadic meeting--and raises important questions about the origins of the problematic patterns characteristic of prescriptive matches. Were prescriptive volunteers matched disproportionately with families who challenged or intruded on a match, and thus compromised its effectiveness? Or, conversely, were prescriptive volunteers themselves more likely to approach or interact with families in ways that then taxed their relationships with youth?

Additional data analysis demonstrates that both of these possible factors that would challenge volunteer/youth relationships (e.g., family-initiated tensions that intrude on a match and volunteer transgressions of family boundaries) were more likely to be present in prescriptive relationships. Analysis of caseworker records and match interviews revealed that although the difference was small, a higher percentage of families whose children were matched with a prescriptive volunteer (26%, or 7 of 27) than those matched with a developmental adult (15%, or 7 of 46) attempted to involve volunteers in ways that violated the volunteer/family boundaries recommended by BB/BSA. These included embroiling volunteers in family struggles or drawing them into providing discipline or basic supports, such as clothing or tuition for the youth.

⁵ Data on volunteer/family relationships were missing or incomplete in seven cases and were omitted from analysis in two more because the youth lived in institutional settings.

More critical, however, was the number of volunteers who themselves extended their involvement and influence into the youth's family--without the family's prior prompting or consent. Nine of 27 prescriptive adults sought to change patterns of family interaction or to influence family dynamics that they believed were detrimental to the youth, while only three of 46 who were developmental chose this style of relating to their youth's families.

The strategies employed by developmental volunteers appear, then, to be more effective than those employed by prescriptive adults when constructing relationships with youth's families. Based primarily on examination of developmental and prescriptive relationships, the following sections identify and describe effective and ineffective practices in relating to youth's families. However, the correspondence between effective approaches and practices in relating to youth and those relating to families is not absolute: a number of prescriptive matches maintained the volunteer/family boundaries recommended by BB/BSA, while a number of developmental volunteers were observed to be involved with youth's families to an extent that caused the youth to report discomfort.

EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH YOUTH'S FAMILIES

The mainstay of approaching youth's families effectively--in forging and maintaining relationships that proceed smoothly and encroach on neither the youth's time with the volunteer nor the volunteer's primary connection to the youth--was knowing how to maintain distance. Most developmental volunteers, as well as those prescriptive volunteers who established smooth relations with their youth's families, respected family boundaries, avoided involvement that extended beyond maintaining a cordial distance, retained a primary focus on the youth and, further, remained nonjudgmental--both in interactions with the youth's family and in discussions with youth about them. These strategies tended to be protective of the youth's trust, to promote their ease in interacting with their adult friend, and to encourage disclosure.

Cordial but Distant Contact

The most common of the effective approaches taken to youth's families--employed by 38 developmental and nine prescriptive volunteers--was to maintain cordial but distant contact. While friendly and polite, these volunteers generally kept contact--the amount of time spent in conversation about the youth or other family members, and involvement with individuals or the family as a whole--to a minimum. Considerable variation existed among volunteers who took this approach. Some reported that because of language barriers or work shifts, contact occurred only "about every three months"; for others, contact was weekly, but was generally confined to discussions of activities and timetables, and "chat":

I pretty much limit my talking with his mother or other members of his family, and try to make him the focus. (Match 69.BB)

I guess [I] talk to [his mother] most every week when I wind up seeing her. Like this morning, she bowls over here so I picked him up at the bowling alley

and she's usually there too . . . [what we talk about is] just pretty much what are you guys going to do today and when are you going to be home . . . so she knows and that sort of thing. But on occasion, if he's still bowling or something like that, the last five or 10 minutes, we just kind of chat. (Match 78.BB)

One youth described:

[When she talks to my mom] it's well, you know, come in, 'cause like I'll not be totally ready. And [they say] hi, how you doing, you know. Oh, so you're going to be doing this today, oh okay, that kind of a thing. I mean I don't think that they're supposed to really be talking. I mean, 'cause it's just for me and her, you know, not my mom. (Match 54.LS)

Maintaining this distance, however, was not always easy, since many family members sought the volunteer's advice and attempted to draw them into family dilemmas. According to these volunteers:

[Whenever I went to pick up my Little Sister] . . . the mom got in on the conversations, was nagging her while we were talking, interrupting us, and kept trying to shift the focus on her. I think she's one of these really needy people that needs attention so she's trying to get it from wherever she can. (Match 30.BS)

When we were first matched, her mom wanted to come along. You know, she would--she went about it in a [roundabout] way. You know, she would say well they're having this, that or the other thing, and I was wondering if we could all go and that kind of thing. So it became very hard for me, you know. She would volunteer to get tickets to the circus, that was one of the things. So you know her mom and her sister and Lisa and I went to the circus . . . but all the attention was on all the other family members and Lisa just sort of faded into the background. And you have everybody kind of poking at me saying well did you hear about what [her sister] did or did you hear, you know, and everybody's talking about everybody else. (Match 23.LS)

While equal numbers of parents whose children were in developmental and prescriptive matches sought to involve volunteers in family dilemmas, developmental volunteers more effectively resisted the family's efforts to draw them in. Four developmental volunteers reported responding to the family's request once, but subsequently demurred after noting the consequences to the youth. Two other developmental volunteers described how caseworkers helped to extricate them from further involvement:

Her mother tried to invite me to several [more] of these functions and I backed away from that because one of the comments that the caseworker made was

that with this family, they try to take advantage of everything they possibly can. And that volunteers have worked with the family before over a period of time and said, you know, gosh, I just got much more involved in this than I ever thought I would. (Match 23.BS)

Oh, I had to [contact my caseworker] because there was just too much tension and I couldn't deal with it anymore. And I said, you know, we need to address this issue and get this thing out in the air. It's probably better that you [the caseworker] deal with it. And you know, once she talked to [this mom] everything was a lot better. I mean because every time I'd come I could sense friction. I don't like to feel uncomfortable that way. (Match 41.BB)

Responding to Questions of Abuse or Neglect

Both prescriptive and developmental volunteers heard distressing examples of what could easily be viewed as neglectful or damaging parenting. Indeed, the pull to influence parents away from styles of parenting they perceived as harmful was experienced by many volunteers in the program:

A couple of times, I picked her up and she's just been with her mom on the weekend, it's been a bad weekend, you know, real bad. She'll be, you know, I have to talk her through it, you know. And that's hard to do without saying horrible things about . . . plus I get her dad calling and saying horrible things about the mother, you know, and I'm like look, that's not my job. And I can't say anything bad about her mom, I can't. (Match 52.BS)

One time, she said that her mother's boyfriend had been abusing her. (Match 57.BS)

She had a cold it seemed every time I saw her like for weeks. And she was hardly ever dressed warm enough. (Match 23.BS)

Developmental volunteers resisted getting involved directly in situations like those described above and, instead, contacted caseworkers. In each of the above-described cases, caseworkers were able to intervene successfully: supporting the volunteer in withdrawing from conversation about the child's "bad" parent that made her uncomfortable; verifying a question of abuse and intervening; and ensuring that a sick child both saw a doctor and was thereafter more appropriately dressed.

Further, developmental volunteers listened to youth's complaints or "venting" about their parents--at times providing crucial coping support--but refrained from commenting in ways that disparaged the youth's family. As the following quotes attest, finding a response that simultaneously conveyed understanding of the youth's difficulties with parents, and implied

little or no criticism, could prove difficult, but was effectively resolved by "just listening" and assuring youth of the volunteer's empathy and caring:

When she gives me information about her mother . . . I have a hard time discussing it with her, only because of the fact that I can't put her mother down, because that's not right, as well as I don't have a lot of knowledge in that type of environment or that type of situation that her mother is going through . . . so it's more of a listening and trying to draw out from her how she feels. (Match 12.BS)

Well, I let her tell her whole story first and the main thing that I did was listen. And I kept telling myself throughout this, don't put my judgment on this because I'm not involved in this situation. So maybe what I did was listen to what she said and I told her that I hoped it worked out for everybody that's involved. (Match 27.BS)

The strategy of listening without comment or judgment was also effective in protecting youth's trust and preventing alienation when parents relayed information about them to volunteers. Many volunteers who were effective in dealing with youth's families, in fact, wanted occasional reports about "how she's doing" or "what's been going on." More important than what the volunteers heard was how they acted on the information parents disclosed. Most developmental volunteers spoke to parents outside the youth's presence--often without the youth's knowledge--and, for the most part, neither acted on nor repeated information conveyed by the parent, but, instead, as the following quotes demonstrate, "just knew about it":

I don't mention it all, I just know the situations that occur at home and what's causing him to get into trouble. (Match 46.BB)

I hear all about it from her mother--what Amanda's doing at home and what she's not doing . . . but of course I never tell Amanda. (Match 16.BS)

INEFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH YOUTH'S FAMILIES

Approaches that were ineffective with youth's families, taken by 13 prescriptive and four developmental volunteers, coalesced around a central theme: volunteers extended the scope of their effort or friendship to include members of the youth's families, or expanded the focus of their involvement to include attempts to intervene in family problems. Similar to the approach taken by prescriptive volunteers whose goals were transformative, these primarily prescriptive volunteers overstepped family boundaries, sought demonstrable change in family dynamics and, at times, expressed to youth their criticism of the family--parents and parenting styles in particular. Not surprisingly, these approaches toward the youth's family tended to reduce youth's trust, to place the youth in awkward or embarrassing positions, and to inhibit youth from divulging struggles that involved their families.

When solicited, ineffective volunteers were more likely to agree, or be unable to refuse, to assist the youth's family. Yet few volunteers were able to negotiate extended family involvement without causing the youth to feel slighted as the volunteer's attention shifted onto others, or causing themselves such frustration or "battle fatigue" that withdrawing from the match was a not uncommon result. One volunteer described taking on a powerful role in a troubled family that asked for help:

Her mom complained for a while they'd been having problems and [had been saying] Charlene this and Charlene that and so on and so forth, and I just, one night, I said, okay, we're going to sit down and we're going to talk about this right now. So like an hour of the visit that I should've been spending with Charlene alone, I spent with Mom and Charlene, so we could get somewhere and, you know, like ask some questions with Mom and ask some questions of Charlene and she wanted suggestions. I said the most that I can give you right now is that you two need to work together. You know, when you want Charlene to do dishes, say why don't you help me with the dishes, or when you want her to clean the living room, say, well, I'll vacuum and you pick things up . . . I said her and I don't seem to have a problem at all. I mean we've done dishes at my house . . . and if I ask her, she just pitches right in . . . the other night, I went over there and her mom and her dad were fighting, or her stepdad. And you know I ended up going in there, spent like 45 minutes to an hour breaking up the fight. I'm like [to her stepdad], outside, you know, now. And he's like, don't touch me. And I'm like I'm not gonna touch you, just get outside, you know. I said you've got four kids here crying, and I said this is bull. You know, if you guys have to fight, do it some place else, you know. And I took him outside, talked to him, [then] come in and talk to Mom, [then] got Charlene calmed down . . . I mean it's like I go in there, and I almost feel like God, you know. (Match 14.BS)

Unfortunately, as the relationship between the youth and mother further deteriorated (the result, the mother claims, of the youth's increasingly negative comparisons of her and the Big Sister), the mother requested that the volunteer limit her visits to the program standard of once weekly. Further, this Big Sister grew increasingly frustrated by what she perceived as both the youth's and the family's resistance to positive change, and ended the relationship.

Similarly, when at the request of youth's parents, volunteers joined in parenting--in setting limits at home or school, or in discipline--consequences were similar to those that developed when volunteers took on a parental role on their own initiative, as described in the previous chapter on interaction and communication. The most frequent casualties were the youth's belief that the volunteer could be trusted with secrets, and their sense of being relieved of often tense home situations--a type of support that youth both valued highly and quite often needed.

The five youth for whom the Big Brother or Big Sister and parent attempted "joint" parenting reported feeling "ganged up on" and felt that the volunteer was neither on, nor adequately considering the youth's side. For example, one volunteer described how she was used by her youth's mother as a disciplinary tool:

When [Tamara] does act up, [her mom] says does your Big Sister know about this, and Tamara will go, well, no. And then [her mom says], I'm gonna call her and I'm gonna tell her, and then Tamara's like, oh well, okay . . . I'm gonna give her a chance to explain and stuff like that and hear her side of the story. And she's not threatened. (Match 68.BS)

Yet, despite this volunteer's claim that her young partner was not threatened, the youth's responses tell a different story. When asked whether she felt that she could trust her Big Sister with secrets, this Little Sister replied, "No, she'll tell my mom," and further recounted:

[Once] my Big Sister was coming to pick me up, and this boy kissed me on the cheek . . . and she was like, hm whoo--I'm gonna tell it. And I was like, no, please don't--'cause I'm gonna get in trouble. But he didn't kiss me right here, just on my cheek, and she told my mom and I got on punishment for a week. (Match 68.LS)

Or as this youth reported when his mother and Big Brother "made a pact" to enforce good grades and inculcate the importance of positive school behavior, "[He always asked about school] and I wish he would stop . . . and that's one of the things I don't like about Gary. He tells my mom." This youth indicated he confided "some, but not a lot" in his Big Brother. (Match 77.LB)

Similarly taxing for the Big/Little relationship and distressing for the youth was when volunteers expressed their disapproval of the youth's family:

Interviewer: Do you ever talk to him about sex or puberty or any of those things?

Volunteer: A little bit, but more in the things about doing it right, staying safe, and when you grow up and get married, are you gonna get married [I asked him and he answers yes]. Are you gonna be a good father as compared to your own situation? He's seen the other side, and I would hope that he would think that he would like to have a two-parent family. He may or he may not, but I try to encourage him about that part of it . . . His father is just a no good as far as I'm concerned. John [went to see him] with high expectations when he went down there. And afterwards, when he came back from vacation with his father, he didn't say much about it. I assumed that he picked up on that his father wasn't really that interested in him--I know he isn't. In fact, we talked about money: Does your father give you child support? Will your father help you for

high school or college? No, my father doesn't even pay child support.
(Match 36.BB)

And I said the reason why you're having problems at school is your grandmother. She tells him to always speak up but she's telling him to speak up in the wrong way. And this is why he had the problems in school last year . . .
(Match 40.BB)

It is, of course, difficult, if not potentially harmful, for youth to hear such criticisms of their parents or guardians. Research on neglect or abuse in childhood indicates that children's emotional stability often requires that they block out or psychologically defend themselves against the failings of parents (Garbarino et al., 1989). And coming to terms with a neglectful or abusive childhood--whether severe or relatively mild--is an intricate process that can take years. Not surprisingly, the five youth who reported such criticism of their families from their volunteers all indicated that they felt disturbed by or uncomfortable with the volunteer's comments.

VII. ROLE OF TRAINING AND CASEWORKER SUPPORT

BB/BSA is at the forefront of the mentoring field in the range and sophistication of supports it supplies to volunteer and youth relationships--from match selection, through orientation and training, and ongoing as relationships develop and progress. In particular, the hallmark of the BB/BSA approach--continuous caseworker supervision--represents the type of support mentoring research indicates is crucial if matches conceived on paper are to translate into relationships that are meaningful in participants' lives (Styles and Morrow, 1992; Tierney and Branch, 1992; Mecartney, Styles and Morrow, 1994). Yet, while BB/BSA has codified its years of experience into agencywide standards for relationship support, the specifics of effective caseworker practices--e.g., rate of contact, the content of exchanges with participants, or points of necessary intervention--have not been systematically researched. Nor have the effects of other structured forms of relationship support common to BB/BS agencies--e.g., orientation, training or annual reviews--been adequately explored.

While inquiry into the crucial and complex relationship between agency support and relationship effectiveness is beyond the scope of this inquiry, and would require research of a fundamentally different design, this study contributes to this line of inquiry by presenting participants' impressions of agency support and training. We wish to emphasize that the material presented in this chapter is distinct from that in other chapters of this report, which presented findings based on systematic and comprehensive data collection strategies. Being primarily a series of examples based on volunteers' perceptions, this chapter cannot claim similar comprehensiveness; thus, any conclusions suggested herein are strictly speculative.

When time permitted, volunteers were asked during interviews to reflect on the training they received from BB/BS, if any, and to relate instances of caseworker support or intervention that were particularly noteworthy, either in effectively rendering support or in failing to intervene. These highlights in volunteers' perceptions of agency services and support are the focus of the following sections, which address, first, training and, second, caseworker practices.

TRAINING

The eight agencies selected to participate in this research were chosen to represent the diversity of BB/BSA programs nationwide. Two of these agencies provided no training--though all volunteers were required to attend a pre-interview orientation. The remaining six offered compulsory training close to match date; four of these offered additional, occasional sessions on such key issues as relationship development in longer-term matches, youth in poverty, and developing self-esteem. In only one agency, however, was additional training compulsory.

The importance of training is suggested by volunteers' perceptions, their reports on the sources of advice and information they found to be effective in dealing with youth, and the fact that a disproportionate number of prescriptive volunteers did not receive training. Essentially,

these factors indicate that training could have an important bearing on how matches develop, and whether they evolve into consistent, ongoing and meaningful relationships that support youth.

Volunteers' Perceptions and Recall of Training

For the most part, volunteers described training as providing important information about the type of youth involved in BB/BS, youth development in general, the standard profile of BB/BSA relationships, and, most crucially, the basic parameters of the BB/BSA model--e.g., weekly activities-focused meetings and friendship-based roles. As these volunteers reported:

I sometimes referred--early on in our relationship I had to look back at my notes to some suggestions--like what to do if this occurs. So it was good training. (Match 45.BB)

I liked the little mock discussions we had in the training beforehand . . . kinda what if, how you'd handle that. You know, you got views from other people there, you know, rather than going into it blind. And just to know that you have support here whenever you need to talk to somebody else, too. (Match 48.BS)

I thought it was excellent . . . particularly how the relationships that grow are developed . . . how it can take time. They gave me a booklet, which I still look at on occasion. (Match 33.BB)

I like the fact they emphasized that people have different values and you cannot try to impose your values on other people . . . and the training brought to light that . . . you couldn't go into a relationship like this with preconceived notions that you were gonna . . . straighten out somebody's life, it just doesn't work that way. (Match 23.BS)

In training, they said it would take up to about six months or half a year before they really started opening up, so I haven't been too worried about it yet. (Match 39.BS)

Of course, not all volunteers' reports were this positive; a number, both prescriptive and developmental, dismissed the training as "just common sense." On balance, however, reports were not only positive, but even those who were less than enthusiastic noted instances in which they had drawn on information recalled from training to solve a dilemma. As one volunteer recounted:

He asked me to go to his school to hear him sing, and I just felt really strongly--and still do--that it was his father who should've gone. So I told him that, I said that and then he told his father, which wasn't really what I meant. And

that was just like my big blaring mistake, 'cause his father just blew his stack. And I remembered that at orientation, they said the worst thing a Big can do is tell a parent they're doing something wrong. So I apologized and now I just don't deal with it . . . I kind of stay away from his relationship with his father. (Match 82.BB)

Another common response was that training "overdid it":

I thought, God . . . it was gonna be, you know, more of a problem than it has actually been . . . I guess I'm glad they prepared more than I really [needed] but the way they prepared you was, you could have this problem, this problem, this problem. (Match 41.BB)

More frequent than reports that trainings were less than helpful, however, were requests for sessions that were ongoing and more in-depth. Volunteers appeared to have a number of purposes in mind when they expressed a wish for ongoing training, but these requests generally centered on more detailed information about youth and youth development and on problems that might be expected to crop up:

Training like once a year will be good . . . there's always new issues coming up, and maybe if they grouped people by how old your kids are--if your kids are 8 to 10, or 11 to 13--here's some of the issues and ways of handling those issues. I think that would really be helpful. (Match 27.BS)

[What could have been added was something on] probably cultural differences and I think as we progress into a black/white relationship, I think that should be talked about more and explained and talked about, and maybe networking more with other Big Brothers, probably not talking, probably more planning to do things together. (Match 51.BB)

I think they gave you suggestions and stuff like that, you know. But I think they need to reiterate it more, you know, have refresher and follow-up courses to see how well you're doing and stuff like that. (Match 22.BB)

And from volunteers who experienced ongoing training:

I think they did a really good job. One of the things I liked it was . . . like a session or something where they talked about different topics, like, um, building confidence up in a Little . . . it was really good because it was like you shared real experiences and problems you were having with your Little with somebody else who could toss ideas round. And it was really good. (Match 31.BS)

Well, like I said, I have one more training session to go and I feel like I could use that. I really think they give us much help. (Match 45.BB)

Training and Relationship Type

Table 7 presents a cross-tabulation of developmental and prescriptive relationships by agency type--e.g., whether they were training or non-training sites. As the table demonstrates, volunteers who received training were, in fact, more likely to have created developmental relationships. Of the 60 volunteers who received training, 45 (75%) were in developmental matches, while of the 22 volunteers made in non-training sites, only nine (41%) were similarly developmental. In fact, almost half of prescriptive relationships (13 of 28) were concentrated in the two non-training agencies, while the other 15 were distributed relatively evenly throughout the remaining six sites.

While based on a very small number of cases, this finding lends support to volunteers' perceptions that training assists them in resolving relationship difficulties, in understanding the developmental capacities and limits of youth, and in grasping and implementing the BB/BS model--all factors that this study of BB/BS relationships has demonstrated are associated with developmental relationships. The high correspondence between developmental relationships and training--and the high concentration of prescriptive matches in non-training sites--further suggests that additional research--designed to rule out other potentially intervening variables, such as variations in agency screening practices--might identify training as an important precursor to BB/BS relationships that last, garner the partners' commitment and supply meaningful support for the youth.

CASEWORKER SUPPORT

Volunteers' interviews also contained numerous testimonies of the importance of caseworker support, in particular during the "dry" tentative periods in a match's early life, and in assisting the volunteer when dealing with the youth's family. Instances where volunteers perceived that casework or program support was ineffective or insufficient were reported far less frequently.

Volunteers' reports on the types of caseworker support or intervention that they perceived as helpful concentrated on two primary issues: support dealing with the youth's family, and what can be best categorized as support reinforcing the BB/BSA model.

As described in the preceding chapter, caseworkers played a vital role in intervening during family crises, not only by allowing volunteers to continue their primary focus on the adult/youth relationship, but by supporting volunteers when tensions arose in their relationships with youth's families. As the following quote demonstrates:

Well, I called and asked her what she thought I should do a couple of times because I was about ready to tell his mother where to go. And she advised me

Table 7

MATCH TYPE BY TRAINING

	AGENCY TYPE	
	Training	Non-Training
Developmental	45 (75%)	9 (41%)
Prescriptive	15 (25%)	13 (59%)
TOTAL	60 (100%)	22 (100%)

to just, you know, cool it and just back off. So I did (laughter) . . . [One time] I was really surprised because she really jumped in. Boy, she didn't hesitate, she said you want me to go out to the house, she said I will. And she left like right now and went out there. 'Cause they were concerned about Art because they all knew him, and he is a nice kid. And they realized that he was just being abandoned just like his brother was. So she went right out there, she didn't hesitate. And she even talked to the probation officer, and explained what was going on, so he'd be aware of what was happening too. (Match 28.BB)

Volunteers' reports and case note entries on the frequency of contact with Big Brothers and Big Sisters further revealed a pattern of concentrated contact (beyond agency standards) and concentrated information- and help-seeking from developmental volunteers. This occurred mainly during a match's early, formative months, as volunteers strove to set the groundwork for relationships that would last, play a supportive role in the youth's life, prove mutually meaningful and satisfying, and meet BB/BSA requirements. In particular, these volunteers sought assistance in setting goals and finding an effective style of responding to both disclosure and reticence:

At first, she was like, well, just take it slow and all this, [and that helped] because at first it was really rough with George . . . He hardly said much at all. (Match 66.BB)

We sort of talked about . . . how you would respond to different things and that was nice. And the different rules . . . not to be a taxi-driver and not to do this and that; that was, I think that was helpful, too. (Match 24.BB)

She helped me to kind of remember what it was like to be a kid and what kind of things that kids do. At the beginning, I would talk to her and express whatever concerns like I had, you know, is he having a good time, is this a good thing . . . She said that a lot of times kids don't realize that they are pretty egocentric and--that's my word, I guess . . . that in a way, they think the world revolves around them, but in another way they don't. So that helps--to be a little bit aware of that . . . Initially, when I realized it was below my expectations, I let the caseworker know and just said, be aware, or is he getting anything out of this? Is he enjoying this? She said he really was. (Match 69.BB)

A number of developmental volunteers reported that caseworkers were particularly instrumental in helping them to forge appropriate roles, such as those this research has identified as crucial to forming relationships. For example, when one volunteer was told by her Little Sister's mother that the Little Sister had not been turning in homework, she contacted the agency, where she was advised "to continue to be a listener, not to get involved with homework problems" but to be "positive and encouraging." (Match 57.BS) Another volunteer reported, "She said that was really up to his mom . . . to just let it go."

In addition, developmental volunteers reported receiving valuable advice on including youth in the relationships' decision-making process:

Early on, it seemed like I was making all the decisions of what we should do without any input from him. And she said, why don't you give him a few choices, would he like to do this or do that. He'll participate that way. (Match 45.BB)

Developmental volunteers from four agencies also reported that agency training and materials recommended that they share decision-making with their young partners as much as possible.

Finally, one of the most cited types of agency and caseworker assistance was perhaps the most straightforward. Often stretched for ideas and strapped for funds, developmental volunteers reported appreciating agencies' activities lists, special events and, in particular, free tickets--opportunities that helped them provide youth with the fun, recreational and horizon-broadening activities that were the mainstay of relationships that both lasted and continued to develop.

Prescriptive volunteers, despite the conflict and struggles that characteristically laced their relationships, were far less likely to report having contacted caseworkers, a pattern corroborated by analysis of case notes. In fact, prescriptive volunteers appeared not only to have avoided caseworker contact, but, at times, to have eschewed their advice. The 11 prescriptive volunteers whose difficulty centered primarily on accepting the terms intrinsic to the BB/BSA model--e.g., the need for consistent contact of the volunteer's initiation, or that youth's unresponsiveness was developmentally natural and not rejection of the volunteer--were consistently difficult for caseworkers to reach.

For the 17 prescriptive volunteers whose difficulties resulted primarily from their drive to transform youth's behavior and values, interactions with caseworkers revealed a different pattern. A few of these volunteers rejected caseworker advice on the grounds that they themselves possessed superior experience and knowledge, while others struggled to accept the limitations on their role that are intrinsic to the BB/BSA model:

We'd talk and she'd say oh, wow, that was a good thing to do (laughter) . . . Here you have these young gals, and maybe aren't even married or newly married, and no children, and they're trying to tell you what to do with children . . . occasionally I felt like, I mean, I raised two children and they're good kids. And I've had some real and still do have very good close relationships with them . . . and I guess, maybe it's appropriate for some of the people that would come in here and maybe that had no children and no experience working with children. I have to be fair here, but some of it I thought was a little waste of my time. (Match 07.BS)

A small number of reports were made of caseworkers supporting styles of interaction that this research has identified as contributing to relationship ineffectiveness--in particular, using meetings as a forum for homework early in a relationship's life and in spite of the youth's resistance; and insisting that the youth show demonstrable changes in grades or reports on behavior. A number of volunteers who pushed homework or insisted on evident changes in grades--despite, in one case, a youth's balking at meeting further with his Big Brother--reported being told by caseworkers "to stick to my guns" (Match 25.BB) or to "just keep at it" with him (Match 49.BB).

Instances where caseworkers supported attempts to discipline or to insist that the youth do homework might reflect a sense of increasing pressure on caseworkers--which they often reported to us in conversation--to effect what are referred to as "hard" outcomes for youth--e.g., improved grades, changes in school attendance, or an end to problematic behavior--and to do so quickly.

With relatively few exceptions, however, caseworkers and training support and reinforce the BB/BSA model. Thus, this preliminary examination of training and caseworker input suggests that BB/BSA's traditional approach is very important to the success of relationships. Indeed, our research indicates that the standard BB/BSA model, which emphasizes friendship/relationship development particularly during the first year, produces relationships that are not only more likely to endure and prove meaningful to participants, but also seem to bear greater promise of guiding youth toward improved outcomes of all kinds.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mentoring programs that pair adults with young people have gained substantial popularity in recent years. Unlike BB/BSA, many of these programs seem to underestimate the complexities inherent in artificially initiated relationships. P/PV's goal for this in-depth study of BB/BS matches was to broaden our understanding of programmatically created relationships in ways that could provide guidance not only to BB/BSA, but to mentors and mentoring programs in general.

By examining the content and dynamics of programmatically created relationships in detail, this study has identified common problems and frustrations that mentors encounter, and discerned the types of approaches taken by mentors to overcome these difficulties, including those who have gone on to create and maintain satisfying relationships with their youth. The lessons detailed in this report are intended to be useful in helping mentors overcome the hurdles they face in building their relationships, and in suggesting to program operators effective ways to select, match, train and supervise mentors.

LESSONS FOR MENTORS

Our research indicates that BB/BSA's emphasis on the mentor's role as a friend is a focus that is likely to lead to a higher rate of developmental relationships than might be found in a mentoring program with more transformative goals. Volunteers who interacted with young people primarily as individuals with deficits that needed to be fixed were less likely to form developmental relationships than were volunteers who interacted with youth as individuals to be supported. This conclusion about the nature of individual relationships mirrors a recent consensus in the youth field about programs--namely, that deficit-model programs are far less effective in achieving their goals than are more supportive, holistic youth programs (Gambone, 1993; Grossman and Halpern-Felsher, 1993).

To be a good mentor, one need not be a good teacher or moralist--one need "only" become a close friend to the youth. But this study shows that friendship does not occur simply because that is the intention of the program. The friendship between a mentor and a youth requires skill and time. Those volunteers who were able to develop lasting and supportive friendships with their youth displayed the following traits fairly consistently:

- They took time to establish and maintain the youth's trust.
- They were far more likely to listen, sympathetically and nonjudgmentally, when the youth revealed disturbing material, rather than risking judgments or lecturing the youth.
- They respected youth's desire to have fun and encouraged their participation in making decisions about the pair's activities and the nature of their communication.

- They negotiated with the youth until mutually satisfactory activities were agreed on.

These techniques or characteristics of developmental volunteers facilitated relationships. Once established, these friendships broadened the youth's horizons, provided them with opportunities to explore life beyond the immediate neighborhood, and served as a valuable resource for support and, for some, for advice and guidance. These outcomes appear to be highly valued by the youth.

LESSONS FOR MENTORING PROGRAMS

While establishing friendships may appear to be cheap and easy, it is not. Adults and youth are often widely separated by age, background and sometimes culture. Even mentors with good instincts can stumble or be blocked by the difficulties inherent in these differences. Our investigation showed that the BB/BSA program structure and many of its practices appeared to help matches identify pathways of relationship development that led to long-term relationships, and to assist them when they faltered. While this study did not rigorously test the degree to which such practices were responsible for the development of good relationships, the regularities that we observed among the developmental relationships lead us to believe that strong program practices that encourage developmental behavior could increase the percentage of these relationships. The recommendations discussed here, while speculative, are based on our cumulative knowledge of mentoring relationships begun in Styles and Morrow (1992) and expanded and refined here.

Early Program Information

Volunteers' initial understanding of program goals had much to do with the way in which they interacted with the youth and, in turn, the type of relationship that formed. Programs have several vehicles through which they can influence this understanding. The two most obvious are the initial program information and the orientation sessions given to potential volunteers.

The developmental volunteers' principal goal was providing youth with opportunities they did not currently have. Sharing fun activities with their youth was one of the most important features of these relationships, as were meeting consistently and letting the youth have some say in the choice of activity. Thus, when describing themselves, mentoring programs should stress to volunteers early on that sharing fun activities and being a reliable presence to the youth are in and of themselves valued goals of the program. Volunteers should view the program primarily as a way of providing currently needed adult companionship, rather than a way to help a youth succeed in life by means of adult direction and advice.

In addition, programs may wish to explore more fully during the screening process what the potential volunteers expect to accomplish through their involvement with a youth. Programs might wish to screen out volunteers whose goal is rapid improvement in the youth's behavior, or at least provide these volunteers with extra training and supervision.

Training

Many of the adults who volunteer for mentoring programs have relatively little idea of where the youth are developmentally or how best to interact with them. And yet the tone of a relationship can be quickly set at the beginning. Thus, it seems important to provide volunteers with pre-match guidance. Although BB/BSA does not require volunteer training, many sites offer it. Volunteers who received such training said they valued it--both directly and through reports of recalled lessons.

This report suggests that perhaps the most important lesson that training should attempt to teach the mentors is that building a relationship cannot be rushed. Only when a solid relationship has been established and the youth is receptive to the adult's input does the adult have any chance to be effective in encouraging youth to change their behavior. Volunteers who push too quickly to change youth behaviors are unlikely to succeed and are likely to jeopardize the relationship.

Specific areas of training likely to be useful include teaching volunteers what difficulties they might expect to arise over the course of the relationship and how to deal with them. Future mentors should come to understand the importance of their early interactions. The youth, while they do not articulate it, often use this period to test and get to know the volunteer. Thus, besides discussing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative styles of interaction, training could cover frustrating experiences volunteers should expect to encounter with youth, such as reluctance to talk, missed appointments, unanswered phone calls and exaggerated demands.

Skills and techniques to deal appropriately with such frustrations could also be suggested. For example, it is important from the beginning of the relationship to involve the youth in decisions about what to do. Considering the youth's preferences, however, does not mean always doing what the youth wants, but rather discussing and negotiating to find an activity that is satisfactory to both youth and adult. As many BB/BS agencies realize, volunteer training in negotiating skills and limit-setting can be beneficial.

Some BB/BS agencies also provide training in active listening. As was discussed in Chapter IV, it is important for volunteers to be able to listen to the youth without providing advice. Often, the youth just want someone to listen to their problems. Active listening skills help the listener convey to the speaker that he or she cares and is attentive.

Supervision

The supervision provided for in the BB/BSA model is crucial. Good supervision can provide the adults with the feedback they may need to keep them working productively at the relationship. Although training can provide volunteers with an understanding of youth in general and give the adults guidance, much of the initial training will likely be forgotten over time. Ongoing training could mitigate this loss, and caseworkers can reinforce the training and help

volunteers adapt it to particular situations. Case managers can help the volunteers understand the meaning of a youth's behavior, provide the adult with reassurance, and help them cope with the youth's developmental limitations.

This type of support for the volunteer is especially important at the beginning of a match. Even volunteers who understand that building a relationship with an unrelated youth will take a long time feel frustrated by the apparent lack of response shown by many youth early in the match. Caseworkers can help them get through the early stages.

Ongoing supervision also helps volunteers control their desire to correct undesirable behavior in the youth. Volunteers in developmental relationships did not try to pursue such goals as improving school performance or having the youth be more responsible before working out a good relationship with the youth--even if this happened many months into the match. And they never let such goals overwhelm the primary goal of providing the youth with a stable, supportive friend and enjoyable new opportunities.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Our research addressed several issues fundamental to mentoring programs: What types of relationships form between unrelated adults and youth when they are created within a BB/-BSA-like model? What types of relationships appear to function better? What types last longer? What practices are common among the better functioning relationships? However, a number of questions remain unanswered by this study.

The first question we cannot answer is, How many relationships that form within a program like BB/BSA can we expect to be developmental in nature? While two-thirds of the relationships examined for this study were developmental, we cannot generalize this proportion to the universe of BB/BS matches--primarily because the sample was not purely random. The eight agencies were deliberately selected to give a range of supervisory and training practices, and matches within those agencies were stratified by gender, race and length of match. Thus, for example, no matches that had existed for more than one and a half years were examined, and it is quite likely that these longer-lasting matches are heavily weighted toward developmental relationships. Finally, many BB/BS relationships involve much younger youth, who are not represented in our study at all. The sample was drawn so that we could carefully examine relationship development, not to provide an estimate of how many relationships were meaningful. Thus, it would be incorrect to draw any conclusions about the frequency of developmental relationships within BB/BSA based on the findings from this research.

This research also raises important questions about whether training and supervision can increase the likelihood that developmental relationships form. Developmental volunteers generally felt that the training they received assisted them in resolving relationship difficulties and in following the BB/BSA guidelines; these volunteers further reported that caseworker supervision provided assistance in such key aspects of relationship development as selecting an appropriate role or weathering a match's early, tentative phase. Our finding that sites that

provided training had a higher percentage of developmental relationship, also leads one to believe that these structured forms of relationship support might contribute to the formation of lasting, developmental relationships. But given the small number of agencies in the sample, this differential could simply be spurious. To fully understand the effect of these structured forms of match support on relationship development, further inquiry is necessary.

The study strongly suggests, however, that programs should explore more fully with adult applicants their expectations for how their involvement will change the youth. Volunteers who desire to improve a youth's behavior quickly, or who believe strongly in taking a prescriptive approach to youth, might be more appropriately used in some capacity other than a one-to-one relationship. As BB/BSA tries to expand the set of services it provides, these volunteers could be used in school-based programs, in events for wait-listed youth or as tutors.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It remains to be seen whether developmental mentoring relationships can produce real changes in the lives of youth. Based on this study and on our other investigations, we are impressed with the potential that well-run mentoring programs have in building constructive relationships between unrelated adults and youth. However, the youth policy field is full of examples of well-run interventions that have no long-term effects on the lives of youth (Walker and Vilella-Velez, 1992). Our upcoming impact study of BB/BSA will speak to the question of how mentoring affects the lives of youth.

Nevertheless, given the universal need of youth for caring and consistent relationships with adults, and the scarcity of such relationships in the lives of many youth, interventions like BB/BSA appear to fill a significant need. We believe that well-implemented programmatic relationships designed to address such a need can play an important role in any broader strategy designed to serve the needs of youth, especially youth in high-risk environments.

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