Running Head: Big Brother Big Sister

Theory of Action Profile Big Brothers Big Sisters

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<http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iILI3NGKhK6F/b.5962335/k.BE16/Home.htm>

**Profile.**

The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Program was established in 1904 by a court clerk concerned with the increase in youth crime. He founded BBBS to help mentor young people and provide wholesome models for them to follow. By 1912 the New York Times reported BBBS activities in 26 cities; by 1977 there were 357 agencies around the United States. Today a BBBS agency exists in every major city in America.

In an eight-year study by Public/Private Ventures published in 1996, investigators found that BBBS intervention significantly changed the lives of children for the better in three constructs – educational success, avoidance of risky behaviors, and socio-emotional competency. The study found that mentoring relationships fostered by mentors and mentees develop into two broad categories: developmental or prescriptive. The prescriptive relationships produced dissatisfaction as the mentor viewed their transformative goals as imperative and set goals, pace and the ground rules for the relationship that some mentees could not sustain.

**How BBBS Improves School Achievement.**

While BBBS programs are individualized with different goals for each match, the PP/V study identified six outcome areas (antisocial activities, academic performance, attitudes and behaviors; relationships with family; relationships with friends; self-concept; and social and cultural enrichment) cited by BBBS staff as objective, these goals were not explicit in the BBBS mission statement before the study but have been included since the study.

According to the study, three of the six constructs identified as goals can be said to directly impact academic achievement. (1) A focus on antisocial behavior decreases school failure. (2) Attention to academic attitudes, behavior and performance is reported to increase little brothers’/sisters’ school achievement grades and feelings of competency while decreasing skipping classes and missing days of school. (3) Parent relationships were evidenced to be stronger as levels of trust and communication increased due to participating in the program. (p 29) Notwithstanding the lack of correlation found between the constructs of peer relationships, self-concept and social cultural enrichment contributed to school achievement, an impact of their affect on school achievement may become evident in the future as reported by other researchers. Holloway, S.D. (1988), Hufton, N. R., Elliott, J. G., & Illushin, L. (2002), and Martin, J. (2007) have studied these constructs and found “students’ education is greatly impacted by their self-conceptions, school environment, and family/peer influences.” (Amenta, 2012).

**Below-the-surface Profile of the Organization.**

The BBBS organization is a colossal organization, yet its individual agencies around the country operate inside the culture of the cities in which they operate. In addition, BBBS has satellite agencies focused on specific ethnic groups underserved.

The organization operates under national standards to ensure volunteers pose no safety risk or are unlikely to honor time commitments with the youth. While the standards in place are exemplary, the screening process for applicant mentors can take as long as 9 months to process, 65 percent do not complete the process because they withdraw or are unable to complete the training that includes racial and/or socio-economic awareness.

Mentors and mentees are monitored by caseworkers that make contact with mentor and youth/parent monthly in the first year; the youth must be contacted directly four times during the first year. Mentors and mentees meet two or four times per month, a typical meeting last four hours.

**Theory of action espoused or demonstrated by the organization.**

BBBS focuses on helping children between the ages of 6 to 18 years who live in single-family homes and are growing up in poverty and/or coping with parental incarceration or military deployment.

BBBS supports cultural outings to help little sisters/brothers gain a wider perspective of their world; however, BBBS also encourages mentors to just be there (anywhere) for the mentees, “At the end of the day, it's really all about starting a friendship, providing guidance and inspiring them to reach their potential.” (BBBS, our programs)

**Potential Research.**

According to the P/PV report, areas of future research include (1) are there volunteer behaviors that generate positive outcomes? (2) How do the characteristics of the young person and the volunteer affect the outcomes: life experience, training or education? (3) Will a minority youth matched with a white volunteer do equally well as a minority youth matched with a volunteer of the same racial/ethnic background?

References

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