



BAYLOR INSTITUTE FOR
Studies of Religion

BAYLOR INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES OF RELIGION SPECIAL REPORT

MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL STUDY OF AMACHI TEXAS



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PROGRAM ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

CRIMINOLOGY HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONLY “HALF” OF A FIELD. ITS FOCUS IS LIMITED TO ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR, WITH ALMOST NO ATTENTION EVER GIVEN TO PROSOCIAL ACTIVITIES. THAT IS, CRIMINOLOGISTS ASK WHY PEOPLE DO, OR DO NOT, COMMIT CRIMES; THEY RARELY ASK WHY PEOPLE DO, OR DO NOT DO, GOOD DEEDS.

ISR’S PROGRAM ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR EMPHASIZES THE NEGLECTED “HALF” OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR. FOR EXAMPLE, WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE GENEROUSLY GIVE MONEY TO HELP THOSE IN NEED? OR, WHY DO MOST OF THE PEOPLE REARED IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBORHOODS TURN OUT NOT ONLY TO BE LAW-ABIDING, BUT TO BE GOOD CITIZENS? INDEED, HOW ARE PEOPLE TRANSFORMED FROM ANTISOCIAL PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR TO POSITIVE PATTERNS?

IN KEEPING WITH THE OVERALL MISSION OF ISR, WE ARE INTERESTED IN EXAMINING THE UNDERSTUDIED ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS THAT PROMOTE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR, INCLUDING THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN FOSTERING PROSOCIAL ACTIVITIES LIKE MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS.



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AMACHI TEXAS 



I. BACKGROUND

Imagine for a moment that you are a young child and that your mother was in and out of prison your whole life, and at the same time your father was largely absent. Suppose you were raised in a housing project or some other impoverished neighborhood and that your grandmother was left with the task of raising you. What if as a child you were raised in an environment where you were regularly exposed to crime, drugs, violence, and abuse. Finally, can you picture being raised in a community where many youth do not complete school and the expectation is that young girls will have children very early in life and young boys assume they may well end up in prison or be dead before they reach the age of 25. These scenarios are not far-fetched for many kids and adolescents today.¹

In 2007 an estimated 744,200 state and federal prisoners in the United States were fathers to 1,599,200 children under the age of 18.² Factor in female prisoners who have children and some have suggested as many as two million children in the U.S. currently have an incarcerated parent. When one thinks of crime victims, however, children of prisoners do not typically come to mind. Neglect, abuse, poverty, and others challenges confronted by children of prisoners makes them one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society. As might be expected, children of prisoners go on to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system.³

What is worse, the estimate of two million children of prisoners only represents the tip of the iceberg. Consider that approximately 700,000 prisoners – a little less than half the total U.S. prison population – are released from America's prisons each year. In addition to the current two million children of prisoners, add another roughly one million children of prisoners who may have a parent leaving prison each year.⁴ Over just the last five years, it is likely some seven million children have either had a parent in prison or released from prison. Further, these estimates do not consider the large number of children of who have or have recently had a parent incarcerated in jail.⁵ By any measure, children of prisoners represent a very large group. In order to break the cycle of incarceration, children of prisoners cannot any longer be overlooked.

The cycle of imprisonment among large numbers of individuals is increasingly concentrated in poor, urban communities that already have enormous social and economic disadvantages.⁶ Most prisoners are ill-prepared to navigate the many obstacles awaiting them after leaving prison including housing, employment, transportation, and trying to re-connect with families. To put it bluntly, most ex-prisoners are not returning to positive and welcoming environments.⁷

So challenging for ex-prisoners is the reentry process that many fall prey to substance abuse and other major health risks.⁸ In fact, a recent study of all inmates released from prison in the state of Washington from July 1999 through December 2003 found the risk of death among former inmates to be 3.5 times higher than comparable residents during a 1.9 year follow-up period. Even more striking, during the first 2 weeks after release from prison, the risk of death among former inmates was 12.7 times that among other state residents. The leading causes of death among former inmates were drug overdose, cardiovascular disease, homicide, and suicide.⁹ These data provide a gloomy picture of what many children of prisoners face when an incarcerated parent comes home.

THE PLIGHT OF CHILDREN OF PRISONERS

When a parent is incarcerated, the lives of their children can be disrupted in many tragic ways. A change in the child's caregivers or the addition of a new member to the household can be quite traumatic.¹⁰ For children who reside with a parent who becomes incarcerated, this may result in foster care placement and the introduction of new family members as well as reliance on non-parent adults for care.¹¹ Repeated changes in family relationships are a common source of disruption in children's lives.¹² The potential instability and insecurities surrounding caregivers can be deeply distressing and even devastating for children and youth.¹³ Consider that children of prisoners are more likely to observe parental substance abuse, perform poorly in school, and experience poverty and disadvantage.¹⁴ Knowing these formidable challenges, it's not surprising children of prisoners are more likely to experience aggression, anxiety, and depression.¹⁵

It gets worse. Children of prisoners are at at-risk for alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency and crime, gang involvement, and subsequent incarceration.¹⁶ Parental criminality is a risk factor for juvenile delinquency and the connection between the incarceration of a parent and a variety of antisocial behaviors among their children is far too common.¹⁷ Moreover, research suggests that because of social stigma and isolation, families often deceive children about the whereabouts of incarcerated parents.¹⁸ Taken together, these debilitating factors can lead children of prisoners into early and frequent contact with the criminal justice system. For some children of prisoners a fatalistic attitude can emerge whereby they believe there is little hope for living a full life, and even an expectation of following a similar path as their incarcerated parent.¹⁹

Unfortunately, research confirms such expectations are often warranted – children of prisoners experience much higher rates of criminal behavior and subsequent incarceration.²⁰ These disturbing statistics are a reminder of the urgent need for intervention strategies to prevent these adverse outcomes for children of prisoners. Finally, we need systematic research to help us determine the effectiveness of these interventions.²¹

THE NEED FOR PURPOSE, HOPE, AND MENTORING

Research has shown that the personal effects of purposelessness can result in a sense of “drift” that may lead to problem behaviors including depression and addictions. Stated simply, the absence of purpose may result in deviant or destructive behavior. In contrast, we know that mentors and the development of purpose in the lives of youth can prevent problem behaviors. Having purpose during adolescence has been shown to be a predictor of positive behavior, moral commitment, achievement, and high self esteem.²²

Children find purpose through role models and participation in mentoring groups which provide the means to discover and commit to purpose. Mentors, parents, and other positive role models are potential sources of purpose for children and youth. Access to these positive role models is essential to motivating youth to develop plans for their life. Like role models, positive environments help youth develop purpose. Religious congregations, for example, have the potential to help youth develop purpose as well as a way to feel connected to their community.²³ Members of houses of worship can help youth develop sense of purpose, character, and moral values. Youth impacted by incarceration may find inspiration for developing hope and purpose through

relationships with mentors that model prosocial behavior.²⁴

Research demonstrates that solid mentoring programs can matter in the lives of at-risk youth.²⁵ Mentoring may also help youth to develop life plans with a sense of direction and meaning.²⁶ There is additional evidence children who have longer lasting relationships with mentors (i.e., relationships lasting at least a year) have higher levels of self-competence and school engagement, more positive relationships with their parents, and are less likely to use drugs and alcohol.²⁷ In general, well-designed youth mentoring programs are effective at increasing children's well-being, improving academic competence and achievement, and reducing problem behaviors.²⁸ In a systematic review of 55 studies of mentoring programs, it was concluded that nearly 90% of the analyses resulted in positive effects for youth.²⁹ We know that resilient youth – those who successfully transition out of disadvantaged backgrounds to the world of work and good citizenship – tend to be set apart by the presence of a caring adult in their life.³⁰ In sum, the best research supports the notion that strong mentoring relationships encourage positive youth development and deter risky youth behavior.³¹

This knowledge begs the more important question, is it possible to create partnerships that intentionally engage very large numbers of children of prisoners and then match them with caring adult volunteers in one-on-one mentoring relationships? If so, is it possible that interventions reaching so many children of prisoners could also provide the screening, training, and management necessary to sustain these mentoring relationships?

MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS: A PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT

During the fall of 1999, I was recruited by John Dilulio, Jr., to join him in launching a new

research center at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). A prominent political scientist and public policy expert, Dilulio and I had become friends and colleagues as a result of our shared interests in empirical research documenting the role of religion as a protective factor in combating crime and delinquency. Dilulio shared an idea with me during the recruiting process – an unprecedented collaboration to provide one-on-one mentoring to children of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated parents from Philadelphia. The plan called for bringing together an unlikely mix of sacred and secular organizations: 1) inner-city congregations (mainly African-American churches); 2) an organization known for creating programs that improve the lives of low-income communities (Public/Private Ventures); 3) a national leader in the mentoring of children (Big Brothers/Big Sisters); 4) a major university research center (University of Pennsylvania); and 5) a foundation that might consider backing this collaborative effort with substantial funding (the Pew Charitable Trusts).³²

After months of meetings, the Pew Charitable Trusts would agree to provide significant funding to Public/Private Ventures to oversee this unprecedented collaboration. The project would be called “Amachi,” and would be launched at a special event on September 15, 2000, at Greater Exodus Baptist Church.³³ “Amachi,” is a Nigerian Ibo word that reportedly means “who knows but what God has brought us through this child.” By November 2000, Amachi was officially ready to move forward. Drawing on the central role of faith-motivated volunteers for mentors to bring hope to children of prisoners, Amachi's motto would become, “people of faith mentoring children of promise.”

THE AMACHI TEAM AND PLAN OF ACTION

Public/Private Ventures would implement and oversee the Amachi project and would provide administrative oversight and financial management, and would take the lead in recruiting

congregations as well as children of prisoners.³⁴ P/PV would collect the data used to monitor the mentoring relationships and gauge the overall progress of Amachi, and would troubleshoot problems as they developed.

Perhaps the most important task confronting P/PV was to find the right person to lead Amachi. It was essential to attract someone who was comfortable with the partnership between BBBS and Philadelphia's African American congregations; a person with credibility in both the secular and faith-based communities. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., formerly the mayor of Philadelphia (1984-1992), but now a Reverend, would be the perfect pick. Rev. Goode had worked with Black churches and inner-city congregations for years, and already had established relationships with many pastors and churches. Rev. Goode brought immediate credibility to Amachi and was able to bring together secular and faith-based partners in a respectful way. Rev. Goode also played a vital role in getting Amachi off the ground quickly. His leadership would be pivotal in not only recruiting churches and mentors, but in working with local correctional facilities in identifying children of prisoners in Philadelphia. As P/PV understood all too well, effective mentoring does not just happen, and solid partnerships between secular and sacred groups can be difficult to navigate. Rev. Goode's leadership was critical in making both of these things happen in tandem.³⁵

Beyond being the source for volunteers, congregations would become critical partners in Amachi. When a church decided to participate in Amachi, this decision sent a very clear message that there was buy-in from the pastor as well as the congregation. Each participating church committed to recruiting 10 volunteers from its congregation, who would be willing to meet at least

one hour a week for a year and mentor a child of a current or former prisoner. Each church was also responsible for collecting and submitting monthly data on how often those matches were meeting. By signing-on congregations were committing to nurture and support the volunteer mentors, and to step in if they were not meeting their commitment. Each participating church received a small stipend for a Church Volunteer Coordinator, who was responsible for overseeing the Amachi effort within the congregation.³⁶

We know inner-city congregations are involved in many outreach efforts covering a host of social service areas (housing, job training, day-care, after-school programs, etc.). In a census of Philadelphia congregations (n=1,376) focusing on the provision of social services, it was discovered that 88 percent of congregations (n=1,211) provide at least one social service program. On average, each congregation provides 2.41 programs and serves 102 people per month. This study concluded the financial replacement value of all congregational social services in Philadelphia to be \$246,901,440 annually.³⁷ Amachi was viewed as another program whereby urban churches would be in the front lines in breaking the cycle of imprisonment.

Research on mentoring children documents positive outcomes are achievable when mentors and mentees meet regularly for a sufficient time period (e.g., at least a year) and there is the necessary program infrastructure to support the mentoring relationship.³⁸ What's more, programs that carefully screen, train, monitor, and support mentors have positive effects.³⁹ This is exactly why Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the nation's oldest and most experienced mentoring organization, was intentionally recruited to participate in Amachi.

BBBS case managers were responsible for screening the volunteers, and providing supervision and support for the matches by staying in touch with mentors, children, and caregivers. Interestingly, Amachi was viewed as another program for BBBS, but it was seen as a ministry for the churches.

However, when it came to self-identification, mentors might use the term Amachi or BBBS interchangeably – a positive indication of the integration achieved through this unusual partnership.

It was decided that Amachi would focus attention on four disadvantaged communities within Philadelphia: Southwest Philadelphia, West Kensington, North Philadelphia, and South Philadelphia. An effort was made to recruit 10 churches in each of the four areas and each of the churches would be asked to provide 10 volunteers who would become mentors for children in the community immediately surrounding the church. Community Impact Directors (CIDs) were hired in each of these communities to provide oversight.

One of the key challenges was actually locating children of prisoners in Philadelphia. As Goode would later state, “There’s no record of these children anywhere.” A breakthrough occurred when Rev. Goode was allowed to go directly into the Philadelphia prisons and speak to the parents in person. Dr. Goode recalls, “I went to a prison and saw a grandfather, a father, and a grandson, all in prison at the same time, and they told me they met for the first time in prison.” During a period of four months, incarcerated prisoners completed enrollment forms for almost 2,000 children who would become potential candidates for Amachi and a faith-based mentor. After receiving the necessary contact information and permission to move forward, an attempt would be made to contact the caregiver for children of prisoners. Contacting caregivers was done with great sensitivity since some caregivers had a strained relationship with the

incarcerated parent. In general, however, most of the caregivers welcomed the opportunity for the child to have a mentor from a local congregation.

CONNECTING WITH CONGREGATIONS

Churches were targeted based on a number of factors, but particularly important was identifying churches that had a significant percentage of members who lived in the community and did not commute from the suburbs. Half the congregations that participated were Baptist, and the other half included Pentecostal, United Methodist, A.M.E., Lutheran, Seventh-Day Adventists, and other non-denominational churches. The 42 original churches participating in Amachi were Protestant congregations ranging in size from less than 100 to more than 1,000.⁴⁰

Pastors tend to be very busy people and making contact with them was not easily accomplished. After contact was finally made, Rev. Goode would meet individually with the pastor at each church to talk about Amachi and learn whether they were interested. Rev. Goode not only discussed the great need for mentoring the estimated 20,000 children of prisoners in Philadelphia, but gave a strong theological foundation for taking on this ministry. In the end, many Philadelphia pastors accepted the invitation to be part of Amachi.

The Amachi message hit close to home for the pastors of Philadelphia’s inner-city congregations. They knew their churches were located in neighborhoods impacted by incarceration. Many clergy admitted they had failed to consider the plight of children of prisoners and Goode’s message would represent a profound wake up call. They knew Goode was correct when he stated, “We have to break the cycle.” In addition to the compelling message, Amachi was bringing a structure for local churches to work within and resources to support the effort. Amachi had clearly defined roles and responsi-

AT MOST BBBS PROGRAM SITES, THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN NEED OF A MENTOR FAR EXCEEDS THE NUMBER OF MENTORS AVAILABLE; THE AVERAGE TIME ON THE WAIT LIST IS 12 MONTHS OR LONGER.



AMACHI TEXAS ★



bilities and churches would simply be asked to provide 10 mentors who would each commit to meeting with a child for at least one hour a week for one year. Rev. Goode made an offer difficult to turn down.

BBBS would handle recruiting children, screening or training mentors, making the matches, or providing the forms of support and supervision. Amachi would provide funding for the coordinator's position in the church as well as cover expenses. Taken together, the Amachi message resonated with most congregations, plus Amachi would bring the necessary resources to help oversee it. The buy-in from the pastors was the first step in the process. Next, the pastors had to convey the message to their congregations and inspire members to reach out as mentors. Some spoke individually to members of the congregation they believed would make good mentors. Other pastors would invite Rev. Goode to come to the church and speak about Amachi.

THE NEED TO REACH SCALE

Amachi is a unique partnership involving both secular and faith-based organizations working together to provide mentoring to children of incarcerated parents. Amachi began recruiting urban churches in Philadelphia in November 2000; and by April 2001, the first mentors were meeting with their mentees.⁴¹ By the end of January 2002, Amachi was operating through 42 churches and had made almost 400 matches. During the initial two years of operations, 517 children were paired with mentors. The spectacular growth of Amachi in such a short period of time in Philadelphia represents an unprecedented development not only in the field of mentoring, but in the provision of social services more generally. Tracking data showed that Amachi was able to recruit volunteers who could be effective mentors and that its highly structured partnership was successful in supporting the relationships, enabling them to develop and endure. Importantly, P/PV's data also suggested the children involved in Amachi benefited in ways comparable to the children

whose outcomes had been measured in previous BBBS evaluations.⁴²

In September 2009, in partnership with Dare Mighty Things, P/PV launched the Amachi Mentoring Coalition Project, which was awarded \$17.8 million in Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funding to provide financial resources, training and technical assistance to mentoring organizations in 38 states. The project was designed to assist agencies to create jobs (i.e., positions to staff their mentoring effort), improve program capacity, establish new mentoring matches, form statewide coalitions, and develop strategic partnerships for sustainability.

Amachi has spread rapidly across the country and there are now some 350 Amachi-modeled programs in more than 100 US cities, partnering with some 6,000 congregations.⁴³ To date, it is estimated these programs have served more than 300,000 children of prisoners. Rev. Wilson Goode and others continue to work to see that new mentoring-children-of-prisoners programs benefit from the lessons learned in the Amachi initiative. In fact, more than seventy sessions of the Amachi Training Institute have been held, and Amachi staff regularly visit programs to provide on-site technical assistance.⁴⁴

The Amachi story provides compelling evidence that churches and faith-motivated volunteers can partner with secular organizations like BBBS and P/PV to achieve scale in addressing one of the most pressing problems of our time. Launched in 2000, and in less than a decade, Amachi has been the driving force behind a national movement to mentor a previously overlooked population -- children of prisoners.

The Amachi experiment would not have succeeded without each of the partners. This fact is a critical reminder that faith-motivated volunteers can play a central role in confronting some of society's most pressing social problems and they should not be overlooked when experts and decision-makers seek to devise future programs

and interventions. Amachi should also be a reminder to people from communities of faith that they are in need of training, support, monitoring, and management. In other words, faith-based efforts need proper oversight and evaluation in order to be fully embraced as central partners in addressing any number of difficult social problems.

Though the Pew Charitable Trusts generously funded the initial demonstration of Amachi in Philadelphia, they did not fund a major impact study. This is unfortunate, because among other things, a rigorous study would have made it possible to conduct ongoing interviews to determine: 1) the influence of faith-based mentors over time on children of prisoners; 2) how parents and caregivers felt about the impact of the Amachi program on them and their children; 3) how mentors were impacted by participating in Amachi. Like so many other new interventions, we are left with largely anecdotal insights to these three important areas. My own interviews with Amachi mentors, mentees, and program managers from around the country, confirm what I have heard from Dr. Goode as well as others who have been crucial to the implementation of Amachi over the last ten years, namely: 1) the influence of faith-based mentors on children of prisoners tends to be positive if the relationship can be sustained for at least a year; 2) parents (and caregivers) of children of prisoners tend to be incredibly appreciative of the involvement of faith-based mentors; and 3) many mentors believe they are more benefited through the mentoring relationship than are the children they mentor.

II. AMACHI COMES TO TEXAS

In Texas, the Amachi program was established in 2006 as a public-private partnership and joint initiative of the Office of the Governor, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the

Texas Education Agency, OneStar Foundation, and all BBBS organizations in the state. The program is funded by the state of Texas with BBBS Lone Star as the fiscal/operating agent for the initiative. Amachi Texas is the first statewide model to offer children of prisoners one-to-one mentoring intervention. The program's mission is to prevent the intergenerational cycle of crime and incarceration by helping children of prisoners realize their maximum potential through safe, positive, one-to-one mentoring relationships. Since its inception, the program has provided mentors to approximately 8,000 children across the state of Texas.

A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL STUDY OF AMACHI TEXAS

Knowing of my involvement in the start-up of Amachi in Philadelphia, leaders of Amachi Texas and BBBS Lone Star approached me in 2006, in hopes I might consider the possibility of conducting a major empirical study of Amachi Texas. Those meetings eventually led me and a research team from ICF International (ICF) to develop a proposal to evaluate Amachi Texas. Our field-initiated research grant proposal would subsequently be funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.⁴⁵

In 2007, ICF and Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion designed and implemented a longitudinal randomized controlled trial (RCT) study to determine the impact of the mentoring offered by Amachi Texas.⁴⁶ The evaluation used a multi-method approach that included process and outcome components to describe not only how the program is implemented across sites but what effect the program has on improving outcomes for children affected by family incarceration. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the evaluation helps to gauge the degree to which community-based mentoring relation-

ships may affect children with incarcerated parents and/or relatives as well as the potential benefits of mentoring relationships for mentors and parents/caregivers.

The study primarily sought to assess the efficacy of mentoring relationships. More specifically, we were interested in identifying the difference between outcomes observed for children matched with a mentor and what would otherwise have been observed for these same individuals had they not been matched with a mentor. These outcomes, for example, included attitudes toward school, social competence, prosocial behaviors, relationships with family members and caring adults, as well as hope for the future. The goal of the study, therefore, was to use information from children matched with a mentor and a statistically equivalent group of students who did not receive mentoring to determine whether the mentoring is responsible for the observed outcomes.

Amachi Texas programs are provided through BBBS, and seek to meet the needs of children in the community by reaching those children who need and want a mentor. BBBS agencies offer a variety of mentoring programs that allow volunteer mentors (often referred to as “Bigs”) to come together with children who have expressed interest in a mentor (often referred to as “Littles”). These services are available to all children, including Amachi-eligible children (i.e., children with an incarcerated parent and/or relative).

The two main programs are the school-based program, in partnership with local elementary and middle schools, and the community-based program through which Bigs and Littles participate in activities in their community. Several agencies also offer variations of the school-based program, including high school-based mentoring programs that give high school students and/or graduates the opportunity to serve as mentors to a younger child in the

school setting or in the community. In addition, BBBS agencies may offer Beyond School Walls, a workplace mentoring program through which partnering companies support and encourage their employees to become BBBS mentors to Littles from a nearby school. This initiative exposes children to the business world while providing a positive mentoring relationship.

As shown in Table 1, each program has specific requirements related to volunteer eligibility, meeting locations (school versus community setting), frequency of meetings between Bigs and Littles, and type of interaction (one-to-one versus group meetings). BBBS organizations use a consistent, youth-centered service delivery model, which takes into account both the needs and interests of the child throughout the duration of the match. The model is implemented by program staff with specialized functions in customer relations, enrollment, and match support. Program staff completed a variety of activities within these functions to screen volunteers, orient children and families to the program, and match children and volunteers.⁴⁷

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment specialists conduct interviews with volunteer applicants, parents/caregivers, and children before they enroll in the program. Enrollment specialists obtain as much information as possible during the interviews in order to make the best match possible. To assess potential volunteers, enrollment specialists gauge the level of interest and motivation for enrolling in the program as well as the potential volunteer’s willingness to mentor children from a variety of backgrounds. Enrollment specialists inform applicants about the expectations of the program. Program participants are asked to make a one-year commitment and to meet two to four times per month with their Little.

Once interviewed and enrolled (after the background check has cleared), volunteers are encouraged to participate in training prior to being

A photograph of a man in a dark blue sweater and brown pants lifting a young child in a red plaid shirt and brown pants. The child is reaching up to touch the red rim of a basketball hoop. The background is a chain-link fence and a building.

**THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN
CONSIDERED THEMSELVES VERY
EMOTIONALLY ENGAGED
IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP
WITH MENTORS.**

AMACHI TEXAS 

Table 1: Big Brothers Big Sisters Core Programs

Program	Characteristics			
	Mentor Eligibility Criteria	Meeting Locations	Frequency of Meetings	Type of Interactions
Community- based	Adult	Community	One to four times per month (one hour a week/ few hours every month)	One-to-one meetings
School-based	Adult	School setting	Once a week/ every other week during the academic year	One-to-one meetings
High School-based	High school student	School setting	Once a week	Structured and supervised group meetings
Beyond School Walls	Adult	Workplace setting	Every other week during the academic year	One-to-one meetings/ group meetings

matched with a child. The training - Mentoring 101 - provides general information about the expectations of the mentoring relationship (e.g., qualities of an effective mentor and keys to a successful match) and enables volunteers to learn about the experiences of other Bigs.

When all of the interviews are completed, enrollment staff develop a match proposal that includes a recommendation for matching a specific child and volunteer. Generally, the match proposal is based on the child's needs and characteristics and the volunteer's experience. In addition, matches are based on geographic location, interests, and preferences. Children and volunteers who cannot be matched immediately are placed on the agency's waiting list.

MATCH SUPPORT

Once a child has been matched with a volunteer, the goal of the program is to provide all stakeholders in the match - the Big, Little, and his/her parent/caregiver - with the supports necessary to ensure the success of the match. A match support specialist is assigned to oversee each match

and to act as a coach, providing a support system for the Bigs, Littles, and parents/caregivers. Match support specialists schedule the first introductory face-to-face meeting between the Big and the Little, help clarify program guidelines and expectations, and maintain monthly contact with all participants to assess their satisfaction with the match and to offer advice and support to ensure the relationship is progressing. In sum, match support specialists seek to maintain the match and reduce the number that terminate.

The three-year study was designed to test the impact of Amachi Texas on youth-level outcomes. Participants in this study consisted of children and youth, ages 7 to 13, who enrolled in the Amachi mentoring program in three BBBS sites between August 2008 and April 2010. Children were randomly assigned to either a mentor list (to be matched with a mentor) or to a "ready to match" (i.e., wait list);⁴⁹ those assigned to the "ready to match" list would be tracked and become eligible to be matched with a mentor 18 months after assignment to the list. At most BBBS program sites, the number of

children in need of a mentor far exceeds the number of mentors available; the average time on the wait list is 12 months or longer. Because of this circumstance, the assignment of children to a non-match or control group was feasible and perceived as a fair and equitable manner in which to distribute mentoring services. However, given the high risk population of children under study, allowances were made to ensure that children with the greatest need, as identified by program staff and the parent/caregiver, were excluded from randomization and participation in the study; that is, the evaluators did not want these children to run the risk of being assigned to the wait list. The advantage of this research design is that, if random assignment is properly implemented with a sufficient sample size, program participants should not differ in any systematic or unmeasured way from non-participants, except in their access to the treatment or one-to-one mentoring services. Stated differently, random assignment is a method to reduce selection bias.

To maximize the number of children included in the study, site selection was based on the proportion of Amachi matches within each site relative to the total number of matches for the state. The study was implemented in three Amachi program sites—Abilene/Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio—operated by three BBBS organizations in the state of Texas. Together these organizations represent approximately 80 percent of the Amachi matches in Texas. Consistent with their affiliation with the national BBBS, these organizations share similar structures and program operations. Differences in program operations are based largely on organizational resources and capacity since revenue sources and amounts vary across the three organizations.⁵¹

The evaluation team met with BBBS program staff in August and October 2008 to

review the study design and recruitment procedures. At these meetings, the Amachi evaluation was introduced and RCT processes and procedures were reviewed. The meetings also enabled program staff to share concerns about the RCT.

For example, program staff expressed apprehension and sought strategies for implementing the randomization procedures among families with multiple children. Staff were concerned that assigning one child in a family group to the treatment group and his/her siblings to the control group might harm the family. Together with program staff, the evaluation team devised strategies to address this potential challenge. Upon the request of BBBS program staff after these meetings, the evaluation team produced a document that provided guidelines as well as supporting materials to facilitate implementation of the study.⁵²

RANDOMIZATION PROCESS

The outcome evaluation is based on a randomized controlled trial design in which children eligible for the Amachi Texas program were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group. A flow diagram of the randomization process is presented in Figure 1. Within the program sites, children were invited to participate in the evaluation once the following criteria were met:

- They were determined to be eligible for the Amachi program (i.e., one or both parents, or a biological family member, was incarcerated, on probation, or parole).
- They were between the ages of 7 and 13.5.⁵³

Once enrolled in the program, Amachi-eligible children and their parents/caregivers

were contacted by the designated program staff to determine their interest in participating in the evaluation. They received information about the study, including the possibility of being placed on a wait list for 18 months before being matched with a mentor, and asked to indicate their consent/assent (yes/no) to participate in the evaluation.

When both the parent/caregiver and child gave their consent/assent, each completed a baseline survey;⁵⁴ those that chose not to participate in the evaluation were placed on the program's "ready to match" (i.e., wait list) to be matched with a mentor as one became available (i.e., staff followed the program's typical protocol). A list that included the child's birth date and the date of consent to participate in the evaluation was provided to the designated program staff. Children were randomly assigned by their birth dates to either the treatment group to be matched with a mentor within three months or the control group to be placed on the "ready to match" list and tracked for 18 months.⁵⁵ A flow diagram of the randomization process is presented in Figure 1.⁵⁶

RECRUITMENT

Based on the proportion of children served in each site, the evaluation team identified enrollment targets for each site. To meet these targets, BBBS staff were asked to implement randomization procedures on all eligible Amachi children from September 2008 through January 2009, with the caveat that the timeline might be extended if necessary. Due to difficulties in identifying Amachi-eligible

children to engage in the study and challenges obtaining consent to participate in the study, recruitment took place between September 2008 and December 2009. During that time frame, a total of 351 children and their parents/caregivers consented to participate in the study and an estimated 700 children (and parents/caregivers) refused to participate.⁵⁷

Following the randomization procedures, a total of 192 children were assigned to the treatment group to be matched with a mentor and the remaining 159 were assigned to the control group (wait list). As can be seen in Table 2, the final baseline analysis included 272 children, 138 in the treatment group and 134 in the control group.

Figure 1: Amachi Randomized Controlled Trial Assignment Flowchart

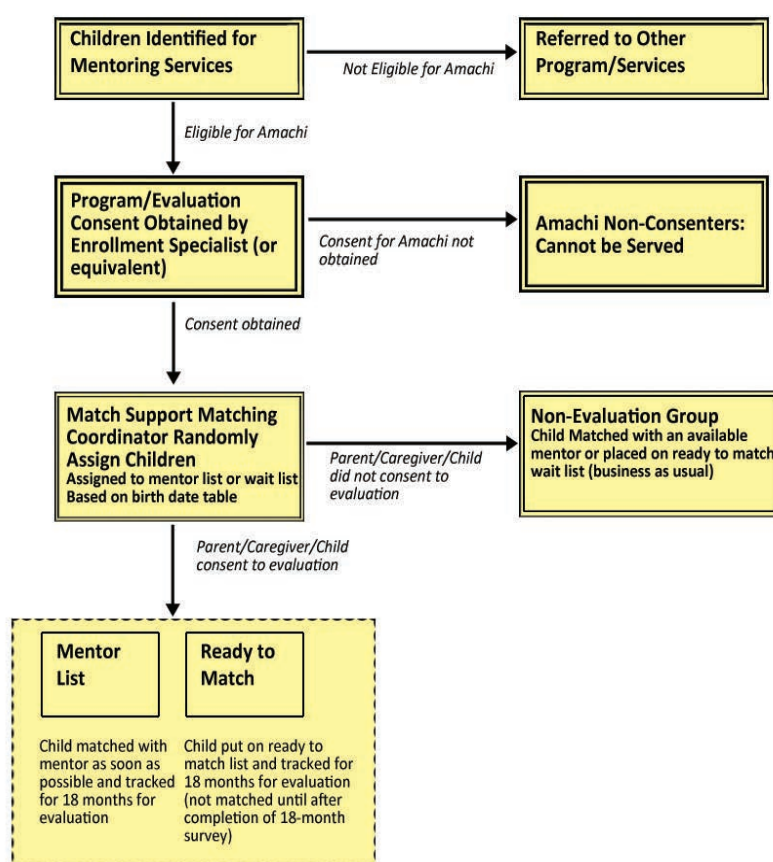


Table 2 : Sample Sizes at Different Stages of the Study

	Abilene/Dallas		San Antonio		Austin		Total	
	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control	Treatment	Control
Recruitment Target	168	168	57	57	31	31	256	256
Number Recruited	131	125	54	25	7	9	192	159
Final Analysis Sample	101	115	30	10	7	9	138	134

III. DATA SOURCES & DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation team collected a variety of quantitative and qualitative data. Data sources included child surveys, parent/caregiver surveys, and mentor surveys. Interview and focus group protocols were also developed to gather qualitative data during site visits.

SURVEYS

Children completed a 72-item survey that examined their behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions about school and community, and their relationships with family. Exploratory factor analysis conducted on a sample of BBBS-enrolled children identified several constructs based on this survey including: encouraging and caring parents (4 items); closeness with parents/family (2 items); parental supervision/awareness (3 items); attitudes toward school (4 items); literacy (2 items); self-worth/self-esteem (7 items); connection to school, community, and family (3 items); ability to make friends (4 items); caring adult other than a parent (1 item); and sense of future (1 item). The survey was designed to be completed at enrollment in the study (baseline) and at three additional time periods. Twenty-three other items regarding youth-mentor relationships were included for each survey administration.⁵⁸

Parents/caregivers completed a survey focusing on their perception of their child's attitudes and behaviors. Survey items covered the following constructs: confidence (5 items), school competence (6 items), avoidance of risk behaviors (3 items), caring (4 items), substance abuse (3 items), religious activity (2 items), property damage (2 items), and violence (2 items).

Mentors had the opportunity to respond to an online survey that examined their experience with the mentoring relationship and perceptions of their mentee's level of confidence, competence, and caring.

INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

Protocols, interview guides, and focus group guides addressed the BBBS service delivery model, including its processes for recruiting, enrolling, and matching children and volunteers, as well as the perceived benefits of mentoring. Program staff protocols and interview guides included questions about the roles and responsibilities of program staff; caseloads; processes and procedures for recruiting, enrolling, and matching children and volunteers; training and professional development for staff and volunteers; and program successes and challenges. In addition, parent/caregiver, mentor, and

mentee focus group guides covered the following topic areas: knowledge of Amachi; delivery of mentoring services and supports; effectiveness of the Amachi mentoring program in addressing the needs of children; and impact of mentoring on children and mentors.

Data collection included child, parent/caregiver, and mentor surveys administered at four time points during the evaluation (baseline, 6, 12, and 18 months). In addition, site visits were conducted to gather in-depth information regarding BBBS Amachi mentoring supports and services. Student and parent/caregiver surveys were administered by program staff on a rolling basis from September 2008 to April 2011. Surveys were administered at enrollment into the study (baseline), 6, 12, and 18 months following enrollment.⁵⁹ Mentors who were matched with children in the treatment group had the opportunity to complete four online surveys (at the time of the match, 6, 12, and 18 months following the match).⁶⁰

Site visits were conducted to each BBBS program site at three time points during the evaluation (September 2008, April 2009, and April 2010). During these site visits, evaluation staff conducted individual and group interviews with program staff, and focus groups with parents/caregivers, mentors, and mentees at each site. Staff also participated in meetings between program staff and local organizations that partner with BBBS to support the recruitment of children and volunteer mentors.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH & SAMPLE

The primary focus of the evaluation was to conduct an intent-to-treat impact analysis (main impact analysis) for the purpose of determining the impact of one-to-one mentoring on core outcomes, including child-family/community relationships, child well-being, and academic/school performance. The secondary goal of the evaluation involved exploratory analyses that examined differences between the treatment and control groups at different time points of the study, and illustrated changes in outcomes over the life of the evaluation. Findings from the exploratory analyses were useful in documenting the potential long-term impacts of mentoring relationships on children affected by family incarceration.⁶¹

The study aimed to gather longitudinal survey data from children and parents/caregivers in the treatment and control groups (at baseline, 6, 12, and 18 months after enrollment). An analysis of retention data from Amachi Texas suggested that 81 percent of the matches were viable at 6 months; however, by 12 months post-enrollment, slightly more than half (54 percent) of the matches continued. Although the standard for the length of the match is 12 months, this suggests that the program has the greatest chance to impact the most children during the first 6 months of the match. The main impact study

Table 3: Sample Sizes and Attrition Rates

		Main Impact Analysis (Baseline to 6 Months)	Exploratory Analysis (Baseline to 18 Months)
Sample Size	Treatment	108	54
	Control	114	85
Attrition Rate	Treatment	18.4%	48.9%
	Control	6.8%	24.3%

CONSISTENT WITH THE PROGRAM'S MISSION, MORE MENTORED CHILDREN CONTINUED TO REPORT THAT THEY HAD A CARING ADULT OTHER THAN A PARENT/CAREGIVER IN THEIR LIVES, WHILE CHILDREN WITHOUT A MENTOR HAD AN OPPOSITE TREND.



AMACHI TEXAS 

Table 4: Participant Demographics

	Treatment	Control
Children		
# of respondents	138	134
Average Age (range)	10.5 (6.9-13.9)	10.5 (6.1-14.8)
Race/Ethnicity (Child)	(n=138)	(n=133)
African American	56.5%	61.7%
Hispanic	23.2%	24.8%
White	8.7%	7.5%
Other ⁶⁵	11.6%	6.0%
Gender (child)	(n=138)	(n=134)
Male	63.0%	67.2%
Female	37.0%	32.8%
Parents/Caregivers		
# of respondents	138	133
Race/Ethnicity (Parent)	(n=138)	(n=132)
African American	58.7%	62.9%
Hispanic	25.4%	25.0%
Other ⁶⁶	5.8%	3.8%
Relationship of child to legal guardian	(n=136)	(n=132)
Mother	85.3%	80.5%
Grandmother	10.3%	17.3%
Father	1.5%	0.0%
Other Relative(s)	2.9%	1.5%

was therefore defined as the period between baseline and 6 months.⁶² Subsequent data points were used to examine long-term impacts and sustained changes over time.

Given the length of the study, the high mobility rates of the target population, the number of data collection points, and the high drop-out rates, obtaining participant responses for each of the survey administrations was difficult. Specifically, there were substantial losses in the number of study participants that completed the surveys administered at 12 and 18 months. Therefore, the sample size for the exploratory trend analysis, which was based on participants who completed all follow-up surveys, was much smaller than the sample size in the main impact analysis (see Table 3). Non-response analysis indicated

that there were no statistically significant differences between the samples with complete data and those with incomplete follow-up data.⁶³

Though randomized clinical trial studies are often referred to as the “gold standard” in research, randomized designs represent the exception rather than the rule in the social and behavioral sciences. There are obvious reasons for this unfortunate reality including the length of time and costs associated with longitudinal research. Additionally, attrition is always a challenge in RCT studies. This is especially the case when a study tackles an understudied and particularly vulnerable population like children of prisoners.⁶⁴ It is easy to understand why attrition in the current study would be particularly challenging. Thankfully, this obstacle did not deter the Department of Justice from funding the study.

IV. FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings of the impact analysis and exploratory trend analysis across the Abilene/Dallas and San Antonio Amachi program sites.⁶⁵ In theory, randomized experimental designs ensure that differences in the average outcomes between treatment and control groups can be attributed to the intervention under investigation. This rigor is possible, however, only if the random assignment process generates treatment and control groups with similar characteristics, on average, at the time of random assignment. Thus, the benefits of the random assignment design can be realized only if random assignment is implemented correctly and produces equivalent research groups. In this subsection, the characteristics of treatment and control groups are compared to establish the baseline equivalence between the two groups.

Table 4 displays demographic characteristics of children and parent/caregiver respondents by treatment condition. Nonparametric tests (i.e., Chi-square tests) conducted on the overall baseline sample indicated no significant difference on any demographic variables between the two groups.

Children in both groups were on average 10.5 years of age, the majority were African-American, males, and living with their mother. Although there appeared at first to be more African-American children in the control group, further examination of the data showed that the Other category selected by both the treatment and control groups represents children who identify as multi-racial, primarily African-American with another race.

Core outcomes at baseline were compared between the treatment and control groups. As Table 5 indicates, children with a mentor

were not significantly different from their peers without a mentor on most core outcomes, with the exception of the following: closeness; connection to school, community, and family; caring adult other than parents/caregivers; and literacy, for which significance levels are larger than .05 and/or effect sizes are larger than .20.

Existing differences between treatment and control group participants might confound the treatment effects. In order to estimate the program effects accurately, these core outcomes were included as covariates in our ANCOVA models to correct for initial group differences. In doing so, we remove the non-treatment variances from the program effects and increase our confidence that the impacts are attributable to the intervention.

The results of the main impact analysis (baseline to 6 months) and exploratory trend analysis (baseline to 18 months) are presented in this section of the report. These analyses were conducted to examine the short- and long-term outcome differences between children matched with a mentor and their peers who were not matched with a mentor. Potential impact was estimated for: Child-Family/Community Relationship outcomes; Child Well-Being outcomes; and Academic/School-Related outcomes.

CHILD-FAMILY/COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP OUTCOMES

Table 5 provides the mean scores, statistical significance level, and effect sizes for child-family/community relationship indicators.⁶⁸ The main impact analysis showed that children with a mentor reported more positive relationships with parents/caregivers at 6 months than children in the control group. Specifically, children with mentors reported that their parents/caregivers were more en-

couraging and provided positive reinforcement (encouraging and caring, $p<.001$, $ES=.64$), were aware of where they were when not at home, knew who their friends were, and set rules that they were expected to follow (parental supervision/awareness, $p<.01$, $ES=.50$). The large effect sizes of these indicators show the effect of mentoring on improving child-family relationships.

A subgroup analysis was conducted to compare the effects of mentoring on child-family/community relationships among boys and girls in the treatment and control groups.⁶⁹ Findings revealed that the effects on encouraging and caring parents were more evident among girls than boys. Starting with a lower average score

at baseline relative to the control group, girls in the treatment group reported that their parents/caregivers were more encouraging and provided positive reinforcement six months after being matched with a mentor (encouraging and caring, $p<.05$, $ES=.54$). Although being matched with a mentor also had a positive effect on boys, the effect size was smaller compared to girls, but still significant (encouraging and caring, $p<.05$, $ES=.38$). The effects were similar for parental supervision/awareness, with both boys and girls with a mentor reporting higher average scores with larger effect sizes than their peers without a mentor.

Table 5: Core Outcomes at Baseline

	Treatment (n=138)	Control (n=133)	P value	Effect Size
Child-Family/Community Relationship Outcomes				
Encouraging and caring parents	4.1	4.1	0.83	0.03
Closeness	4.1	3.9	0.06	0.31
Parental supervision/awareness	4.3	4.2	0.55	0.10
Connection to school, community, and family	4.2	4.1	0.23	0.20
Caring adult other than parents/caregivers	4.6	4.2	0.01	0.31
Child Well-being Outcomes				
Self-Worth/Self-esteem	4.4	4.3	0.22	0.19
Ability to make friends	4.0	4.0	0.78	-0.03
Sense of Future	4.1	4.1	0.95	-0.01
Academic/School-related Outcomes				
Attitudes toward school	4.6	4.6	0.87	0.03
Literacy	4.1	3.9	0.21	0.20
School Competence	5.6	5.5	0.51	
Alternative Education Program (AEP) for disciplinary reasons	5.9%	8.3	0.46	-0.02
Suspensions	26.9%	22.7%	0.43	0.11

Table 6: Child-Family/Community Relationship Outcomes

	Baseline				6 Months			
	Treatment (n=108)	Control (n=107)	P Value	Effect Size	Treatment (n=180)	Control (n=107)	P Value	Effect Size
Encouraging and Caring parents	4.1	4.1	0.14	-.20	4.4	4.2	0.00***	0.64
Closeness	4.1	3.9	0.10	0.26	4.2	4.1	0.47	0.13
Parental Supervision/Awareness	4.3	4.2	0.90	0.02	4.5	4.3	0.01**	0.50
Connection to school, community, and family	4.3	4.1	0.74	0.06	4.3	4.3	1.00	0.00
Caring adult other than the parents/caregivers	4.5	4.3	0.15	-0.05	4.5	4.5	0.99	0.00

p<.01; *p<.001

No significant differences between the treatment and control groups were found regarding connection to school, community, and family; sense of closeness to family; and the presence of caring adults other than parents/caregivers. These findings may suggest either six months is not sufficient time to observe the impact of mentoring on these outcomes, or that mentoring does not have an impact on these outcomes. Exploratory trend analysis was conducted to compare changes in child-family and community relationships between treatment and control groups across time.⁷⁰ Compared to their peers in the control group, children with a mentor started with significantly lower ratings on encouraging and caring parents at baseline ($p<.05$); however, no significant differences were found between the two groups at follow-on time points.

Exploratory trend analysis showed no significant differences between treatment and control groups across time on children's rating of parental supervision/awareness (see Figure 2). However, the treatment group in-

creased ratings on this indicator across time, while ratings dropped at 18 months among children in the control group. Neither the main impact analysis nor the exploratory trend analyses found significant differences between the two groups' perceptions of their connection to school, community and family. However, at the last two time points (12 and 18 months) mentored children reported a greater connection to school, community, and family than children without a mentor⁷¹ (see Figure 3). Similar findings were observed at 12 months for girls ($p<.01$, $ES=1.14$) and boys matched with a mentor. This statistically significant finding suggests that, in the long run, mentors may be able to help children get more involved in, and feel more connected to, their school and community. Similarly, longer term mentoring relationships positively influence children's feelings and connections toward their family, potentially leading to a stronger family bond.

Consistent with the mission of Amachi Texas, more mentored children continued to report that they had a caring adult other

than a parent/caregiver in their lives, while children without a mentor reflected the opposite trend. Specifically, significant differences were found between the two groups at 12 and 18 months, indicating that longer lasting youth-mentor relationships strengthen children's feelings about the presence of caring adults in their life (see Figure 4). These findings were consistent among boys and girls, but were even more evident among girls ($p<.01$, $ES=.81$ at 12 months; $p<.01$, $ES=1.08$ at 18 months).⁷²

CHILD WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

Table 7 displays three child well-being outcomes at baseline and at 6 months post-enrollment.⁷³ Compared to the control group, children with a mentor reported more positive feelings about themselves (self-worth/self-esteem, $p<.05$, $ES=.37$) and about their sense of having a real future (sense of future, $p<.05$, $ES=.43$). Mentored children also reported that it was easier for

Figure 2 : Parental Supervision/Awareness

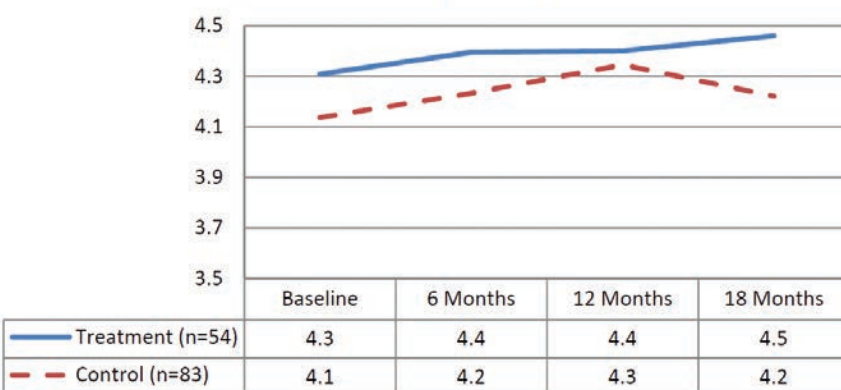
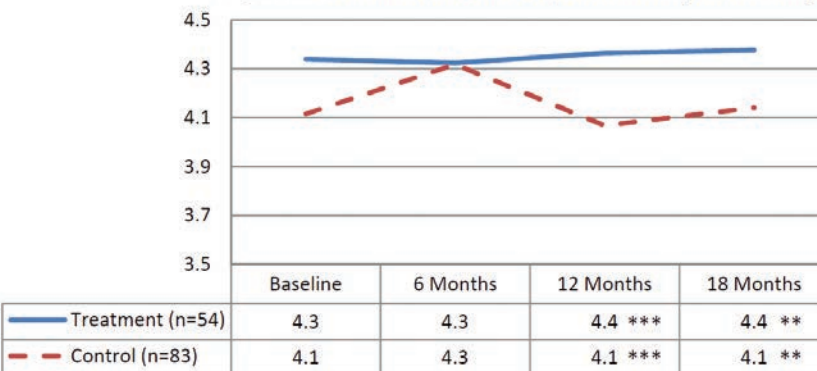


Figure 3 : Connection to School, Community, and Family

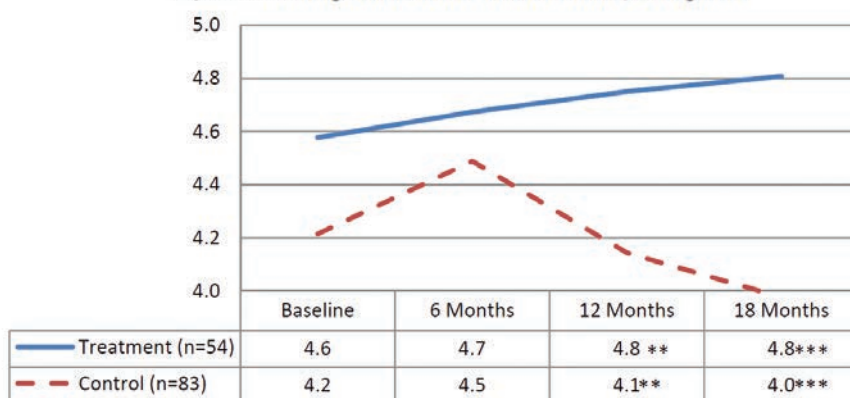


** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$

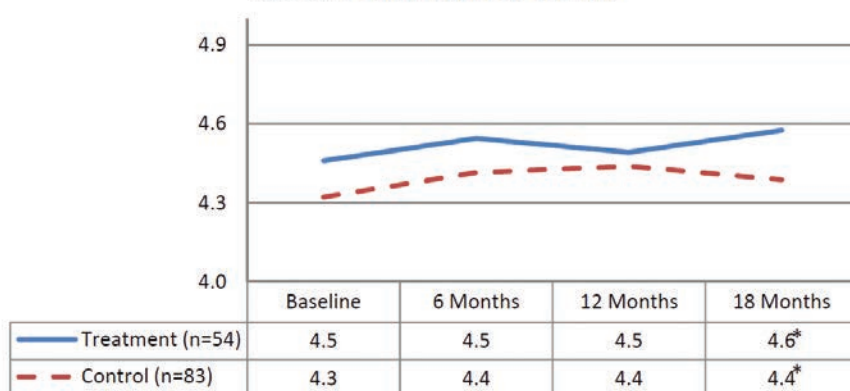
Table 7: Child Well-being Outcomes

	Baseline				6 Months			
	Treatment (n=108)	Control (n=107)	P value	Effect Size	Treatment (n=108)	Control (n=107)	P value	Effect Size
Self-worth/ Self-esteem	4.4	4.3	0.95	0.01	4.5	4.4	0.04*	0.37
Ability to Make Friends	3.9	4.0	0.16	-0.20	4.3	4.1	0.12	0.23
Sense of Future	4.0	4.1	0.35	-0.13	4.5	4.0	0.00***	0.43

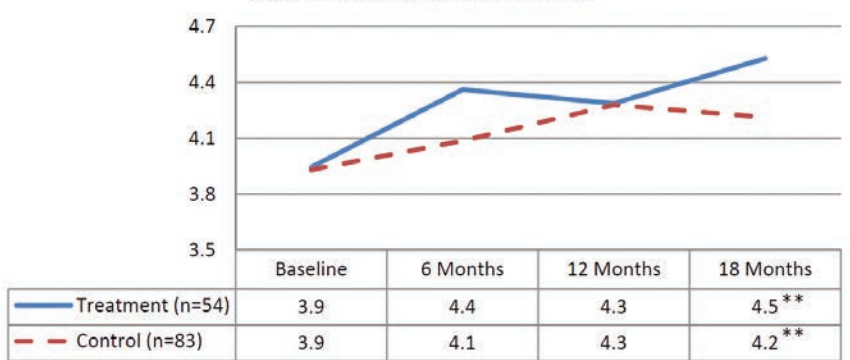
** $p<.05$; *** $p<.001$

Figure 4 : Caring Adult Other Than Parents/Caregivers

p<.01; *p<.001

Figure 5 : Self-worth/Self-esteem

*p<.05

Figure 6 : Ability to Make Friends

**p<.01

them to make friends, although no significant differences were found between the two groups.

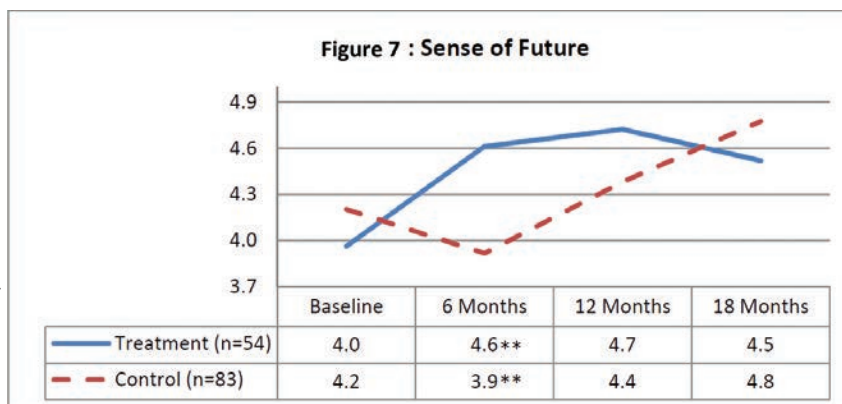
The data indicate that the effects of having a mentor on child well-being outcomes were larger among boys than girls when compared with their peers without a mentor. Specifically, boys with a mentor reported significantly higher scores in self-esteem/self-worth and sense of future than their counterparts, with effect sizes of 0.39 and 0.52, respectively.⁷⁴ Although the differences in the ability to make friends between boys in the treatment and control groups were not statistically significant, the effect size (0.30) achieved approach significance.

We next examine the trends and changes across time for each child well-being outcome.⁷⁵ Similar to the main impact analysis findings, children with a mentor consistently reported more positive feelings about themselves compared to those in the control group (Figure 5).

Significant differences in self-worth/self-esteem levels were found between the treatment and control groups at 18 months ($p < .05$), which indicates that having a mentor has both a short- and long-term effect on raising children's perceptions about themselves.

Figure 6 presents children's self-assessment of their ability to make friends. At baseline, both treatment and control groups had very similar ratings about their ability to make friends. Although both groups had increased ratings at 6 months, children with a mentor outperformed their peers in the control group at 18 months post-enrollment ($p < .01$).

Starting with a lower sense of their future, mentored children showed a sharp increase at 6 months post-enrollment, while those without a mentor experienced a substantial drop over the same period (Figure 7). Statistically significant differences between treatment and control groups were found at 6 months ($p < .01$), and the difference between the two groups approached statistical significance at 12 months. Also at 12 months, girls matched with a mentor reported significantly higher ratings in their sense of fu-



** $p < .01$

ture ($p < .05$) compared to girls without a mentor. At 18 months post-enrollment, children in the control group reported a relatively higher rating than the treatment group, but this difference was not statistically significant.

ACADEMIC/SCHOOL-RELATED OUTCOMES

Table 8 provides mean scores, statistical significance levels, and effect sizes for academic/school-related outcomes, including attitudes toward school, literacy, competence in school, referral to alternative education programs for disciplinary reasons, and suspensions.

Table 8: Academic/School Related Outcomes

	Baseline				6 months			
	Treatment (n=108)	Control (n=107)	P value	Effect Size	Treatment (n=108)	Control (n=107)	P value	Effect Size
Attitudes toward school	4.6	4.6	0.53	-0.10	4.6	4.6	0.69	0.08
Literacy	4.1	3.9	0.23	0.20	4.0	3.8	0.38	0.13
School Competence	5.7	5.6	0.29	0.16	5.6	5.8	0.85	-0.03
Alternative Education Program (AEP) for disciplinary reasons	6.7%	7.3%	0.30	-0.14	4.8%	9.2%	0.18	-0.12
Suspensions	27.9%	22.9%	0.69	-0.05	5.8%	11.9%	0.70	-0.03

As can be seen, the main impact analysis did not find any significant differences between treatment and control groups on these outcome measures. The only differences that are notable are associated with behavior rather than competency and performance. Specifically, at baseline, the treatment group had a relatively higher suspension rate than the control group, though at 6 months the trend reversed with a higher suspension rate among children in the control group. None of these differences, however, were statistically significant.

YOUTH-MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

This section provides analyses of data gathered from children in the treatment group, focusing on their relationship with their mentors and examining the quality of the youth-mentor relationship.

To assess the influence of the quality of the youth-mentor relationship, we used the mentor-youth relationship instrument, which measures three different but related qualities of youth-mentor relationships:

- 1) The extent to which the relationship is centered on the youth. This construct measures the degree to which the youth feels that the mentor takes his/her preferences and interests into account.
- 2) The youth's emotional engagement. This construct measures the degree to which the youth enjoys the relationship and is emotionally engaged in it (for example, whether the youth feels happy, special, mad, or bored).
- 3) The extent to which the youth is satisfied with the relationship.

Table 9: Youth-Mentor Relationship

Youth-Centered Relationship				
	Average Score	Very Youth-Centered	Somewhat Youth-Centered	Not Youth-Centered
6 months (n=100)	3.6	22.0%	73.0%*	5.0%
12 months (n=78)	3.6	34.6%	56.4%	9.0%
18 months (n=65)	3.6	40.0%	50.8%*	9.2%
Youth's Emotional Engagement				
	Average Score	Very Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Not Engaged
6 months (n=100)	3.9	71.0%	26.0%	3.0%
12 months (n=78)	3.8	66.7%	30.8%	2.6%
18 months (n=65)	3.9	72.3%	26.2%	1.5%
Youth Satisfaction				
	Average Score	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
6 months (n=100)	3.4	49.0%	51.0%	0.0%
12 months (n=78)	3.5	55.3%	44.7%	0.0%
18 months (n=65)	3.5	57.4%	43.6%	0.0%

*p<.05

This construct measures the degree to which the youth feels satisfied with the mentor and the relationship.

Children that had been matched with a mentor were asked to evaluate their relationship with the mentor at 6, 12, and 18 months after the match. Findings are presented for all data at each time point.

Table 9 provides the average scores and the proportion of children who gave high, medium, and low scores for the three quality factors of the youth-mentor relationship. Higher scores indicate that the relationship was more youth-centered and the child was more emotionally engaged and satisfied with the mentor.

Generally speaking, at the beginning of the relationship, most children recognized that to some extent their mentors took their preferences and interests into account in the relationship. As the relationship developed, more and more children considered their relationship very youth-centered, with about 40 percent believing so at 18 months. However, the percentage of children who considered the relationship somewhat youth-centered declined at each survey administration, from 73 percent at 6 months to just over 50 percent at 18 months. This finding was statistically significant ($p < .05$).

FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL MATCHES

Given the large number of matches that ended within six months, evaluation staff sought to understand the characteristics of the most successful mentoring relationships, defined as those matches lasting twelve months or longer. To gain an understanding of the factors that can facilitate the success of the matches and the perceived impact of mentoring relationships, evaluation staff analyzed data gathered from interviews with key stakeholders, mentor surveys, as well as drawing

upon match support case notes from a random sample of matches in the Abilene/Dallas and San Antonio Amachi programs. An overview of the findings is provided below.

Most program staff identified the characteristics of the volunteer mentor (such as gender, age, consistency, people skills, and flexibility) as the most important factor in the mentoring relationship. They noted that the most stable matches are those in which the mentor a) wants to be involved, b) wants to give back to the community, and c) demonstrates a commitment to the program and his/her mentee. There was also agreement that flexibility and patience were viewed as the most important characteristics. According to one match support specialist, other traits such as race and class “...can be transcended with commitment, self-awareness, and humility.” On the other hand, the mentors who are least successful are those that have unrealistic expectations about the relationship. For example, they may want the child to see them as a best friend or they may feel the need for constant validation. Others get over-involved— “they want to change everyone in the family”—and become overwhelmed with the relationship.

Many of the individuals interviewed noted that consistency and commitment are critical character traits in mentors in successful matches. Beyond just spending time with their mentee, mentors need to be involved on a regular long-term basis. One parent/caregiver reported concerns about “wishy washy” involvement. This resonated with a match support specialist’s caution that volunteers need to know what they are getting into because their impact can be “... great or horrible.” Other individuals emphasized the importance of mentors spending time and maintaining regular communication with the child. According to one parent/caregiver, “[The mentor] is willing to spend the time [with my child], and that’s a major thing.” The mentor’s ability to be consistent was perceived as an important element to help establish a bond over

time. As one match support specialist stated, “Given that these children have suffered from a parent leaving them, it is helpful for Bigs to be there consistently to establish a trusting relationship.” Similarly, a mentor noted that his mentee expressed the desire to “always stay in touch” due to a fear of another loss in his/her life. Most mentors expected to continue their relationship with their mentee beyond their participation in the mentoring program. According to one mentor “I feel invested in his future and look forward to what he will do as he grows up.”

Across the matches, stakeholders also discussed the need for mentors to be compassionate listeners. One mentor described herself as an “... outlet for the Little to share personal information that he may not be willing to share with anyone else.” Similarly, parents/caregivers noted the benefit of their children being able to contact the mentor when they encountered problems. Match support specialists noted that in order for the mentoring relationship to be successful, it is important that mentors be non-judgmental sounding boards that children can open up to when they are comfortable. In particular, when working with children affected by family incarceration, mentors need to be supportive and open-minded as family structures and values may be different from their own. Mentor survey data indicates that most mentors felt that it was challenging to get mentees to seek them out for support, share issues that bother them, and develop a sense of trust. However, survey data indicate that there was gradual progress over time; at follow-up, roughly 69 percent of mentors indicated that their mentees were able to trust people, a 19 percent increase from their responses at baseline.

Serving as a mentor in the Amachi program provides volunteer mentors and children with the opportunity to establish both a deep

friendship and a mentoring relationship characterized by guidance, instruction, and encouragement from the adult to the child. Many respondents described mentors as positive role models who were more than friends to the child. In some cases, mentors help guide children through the normal issues they face growing up (e.g., getting along with others, school engagement). One parent/caregiver stated, “It makes it easier for me to know there is someone else there to guide them and someone else there that is a successful, positive role model.” A few match support specialists noted that mentors with careers in the military and law enforcement provide children with an incarcerated parent/relative with a unique experience of having a role model that represents “the other side.” At the same time, a match support specialist cautioned that “It’s important that they [mentors] remember to have fun and not just rescue the child or fix a problem.” Many parents/caregivers and staff recognized that mentors take personal responsibility to care unconditionally for their mentees. Their willingness to go above and beyond the role of a friend provides children with a sense of security and trust.

Being flexible and understanding helps mentors to have realistic expectations for their mentees, especially with children who have an incarcerated family member and thus may have atypical behavior/development. A few individuals noted that familiarity with the penal system (such as mentors who themselves have an incarcerated parent or related professional experience) helps volunteers guide their mentees’ understanding and acceptance of family incarceration. These mentors can also help parents/caregivers know what to anticipate when a family member is incarcerated. When mentors address issues related to incarceration, it helps if they do not treat it as a taboo topic. According to a volunteer mentor, “There are

benefits if the Little has contact with the incarcerated family member but it can be challenging when they face disappointments.” Another mentor’s willingness to meet his mentee’s father during his house arrest demonstrated the mentor’s ability to sensitively navigate the role mentors can play when a parent is absent.

Volunteer mentors who have experience working with at-risk youth may be equipped with a range of strategies and approaches to support children affected by family incarceration. Regardless of the experiences and skill sets that volunteer mentors possess, match support specialists emphasized the importance of providing mentors with training and information about the circumstances, challenges, and implications of mentoring these particular children (e.g., family instability, atypical behavior) to ensure that mentors know what to expect and enable them to “meet the kids where they are.” Volunteer mentors acknowledged that they cannot solve every problem the child will encounter, but they believed that they could help minimize or delay the onset of negative behaviors. Across respondents, there was a general consensus that most children need a mentor who can be both a friend and a supportive adult.

OTHER KEYS TO REALIZING SUCCESSFUL MATCHES

1) Common interests:

Stakeholders identified common interests between the volunteer mentor and the child as a key ingredient of successful matches. Most mentors and mentees meet a couple of times a month for an outing, typically during the weekend, and correspond via weekly phone conversations, e-mail, and/or texts in between meetings. Respondents indicated that most mentors and mentees select activities together, ranging from trips to the museum and the library, to sporting events and art classes, with mentors typically providing options or suggestions. Matches also participate

in BBBS-sponsored events (including camping trips) and holiday celebrations, and some children have the opportunity to travel with their mentors to meet and participate in family events. Parents/caregivers and match support specialists noted that many of the mentors introduce children to new experiences such as dramatic performances, woodworking, chess, pet parades, spa treatments, rodeos, and ice skating. Several stakeholders observed that because many of the children come from low-income, single-parent households, one-on-one activities with their mentor provide mentees with a “valuable opportunity that the youth may not otherwise be afforded.”

2) Parental involvement:

In order for long lasting and successful matches to occur, all stakeholders have to be invested and engaged in the match. Parental involvement was perceived as essential to the stability of the match. Specifically, parents/caregivers need understand and accept the role of the mentor in their child’s life, make an effort to communicate regularly with the mentor, and make outings between the child and mentor a priority. During interviews, many parents/caregivers expressed a high level of trust when their child is with their mentor, noting that, “...they are in good hands.” According to one parent/caregiver, “My son’s like part of their family and [the mentor] is part of our family.”

Although lack of parental support and engagement can sabotage the mentoring relationship, respondents cautioned that even if both the mentor and the family member are actively involved, the child needs to be “interested and excited to have a mentor in [his/her] life.”

3) Match Support:

Many individuals reported that support from the match support specialists is also beneficial for the match. Match support specialists communi-

cate with their matches via phone calls and emails, they share information about upcoming events and BBBS activities, and they are a source of encouragement for the mentor. Mentors and parents/caregivers noted that their match support specialist is able to make suggestions to help the mentor and mentee overcome challenges that are interfering with their ability to meet on a regular basis, such as identifying low-cost creative activities in the community. They also provide mentors with information about the child's home environment, which helps mentors to better understand behaviors and priorities. Others acknowledged that some matches need more intensive involvement from their match support specialists to set appropriate expectations among stakeholders about the role of the mentor or to help mentors navigate their relationship with non-supportive parents/caregivers. During interviews, mentors and parents/caregivers unanimously agreed that consistency in the match support specialist assigned to the match is critical to the success of the match.

Although the primary goal of the Amachi program is to provide a positive outlet and role model for children affected by family incarceration, stakeholders indicated that the program also benefits adults. Specifically, most parents/caregivers viewed their relationship with their child's mentor as a partnership that helps lift some of the burdens of parenthood. According to one parent/caregiver, "To know there is someone else who has my son's best interests in mind and exposes him to things I can't expose him to alleviates [the] pressures of single parenting." A few parents/caregivers expressed appreciation for the brief respite and quiet time provided during the mentor and mentee's outings. Others credited changes in themselves to the mentoring relationship. For one mother, the relationship between her child and mentor helped her develop a more posi-

tive perspective about her child's academic ability, improved her ability to communicate with her child, and enabled her to become less overprotective. Finally, others noted that the mentor helped them cope with expectations and emotions related to incarceration issues.

PROGRAM INFRASTRUCTURE IS ESSENTIAL

The information gathered during site visits provided context for the findings of the experimental study. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with program staff, parents/caregivers, volunteer mentors, and children in the treatment group to ensure a complete understanding of the Amachi program and the programming within each site included in the RCT. Interviews and focus group guides emphasized BBBS/Amachi processes and outcomes, including descriptions of program strengths.

► Engagement of children and volunteers is a critical program component.

Children and volunteers who cannot be matched immediately are placed on the agency's "ready to be matched" list (i.e., waiting list). Through its Magic While You Wait program, BBBS offers bi-monthly activities to keep children and parents/caregivers on the wait list engaged in the program. Agency staff invite volunteer groups to participate in BBBS-sponsored events where they are matched with a child for the day. These events provide an opportunity for children and volunteers on the wait list to come together for a fun activity and meet others who are waiting to be matched. In addition to keeping them engaged in the program, agency staff hope that these events will lead to the development of mentoring relationships between participants.

- Agencies target a broad array of organizations to facilitate volunteer recruitment.

Program leaders and staff recognize the important role that community-based organizations can play in the success of the Amachi program, particularly to identify and recruit potential volunteers for the program. Across BBBS sites, staff make an effort to connect with local businesses, colleges/universities, churches (particularly those that run Prison Ministries and Angel Tree programs), faith-based groups such as United Methodist Men, and the military community. Across the BBBS sites in the study, there is a shortage of African-American and Hispanic male volunteers. Program leaders and staff recognize the need to increase volunteer recruitment efforts and to conduct targeted recruitment to increase the participation of African-American and Hispanic male volunteers in the program. Increasing the participation of these volunteers is important given the demographics of the population of children served by the programs and the preferences expressed by parents/caregivers, particularly single mothers with sons, for same-race and same-gender matches for their children. Sites have made significant progress in this area, including building on the initiatives established by the national BBBS, for example, the partnerships with Alpha Phi Alpha and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

- Preparing volunteers matched with Amachi-eligible children is a priority for program sites.

As they continue to increase the number of Amachi-eligible children served, sites have developed and/or adapted training materials to more adequately prepare the volunteers matched with a child impacted by family incarceration. All program staff cited the importance of this training in helping vol-

unteers better understand the issues that a child impacted by family incarceration may experience, as well as the potential impact of the mentoring relationship in the child's life. Several staff discussed the need to prepare volunteers about the issues that may arise when the incarcerated parent returns home in order to maintain the stability of the mentoring relationship. Several volunteer mentors expressed a similar desire for training on how to communicate with a parent/caregiver formerly incarcerated, particularly if the caregiver was unaware of the child's participation in the Amachi program and/or was not supportive of the program.

- Partnership development is recognized as critical to the success of the Amachi program.

Partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations in the community were perceived as critical to increasing child and volunteer enrollment and identifying resources to support families in the program. In particular, partnerships with faith-based organizations, reentry and transition programs, and social service organizations were identified as areas for further development and exploration. The development of statewide partnerships and corporate partnerships for fundraising and child and volunteer recruitment was identified as an important strategy and resource to support the program's long-term sustainability.

- Careful screening of volunteer mentors is at the foundation of the program.

Volunteer screening is at the forefront of BBBS programs, including the Amachi program. Screening practices, which go beyond background checks, not only aim to keep children safe but also avoid the damaging effects that children may experience when matches fail. During interviews with Ama-

chi volunteers, staff share their own personal experiences mentoring children with incarcerated parents/relatives, discuss different aspects of the relationship, including challenges and successes, and give the applicant an opportunity to ask questions about the relationship. The goal is to assess whether the applicant is prepared to address the challenges and issues that may arise during an Amachi match. Close collaboration between program staff helps ensure the quality and stability of Amachi matches. For example, intake and enrollment staff play a lead role in “feeling the volunteer out” and paying close attention to the volunteer’s interests as well as his/her motivation for joining the program. Similarly, when a match ends prematurely (i.e., before the one-year commitment), match support specialists use their knowledge and experience to make recommendations about potential volunteers and/or children that enrollment staff can consider for a rematch. By working together, enrollment and match support specialists are able to quickly rematch the child and volunteer.

- Program sites are staffed by individuals who can relate to, and understand, the circumstances and challenges of the children and families in the program.

Most program staff have a social work or similar background and have worked with at-risk children and families. As a result, they understand the issues and challenges that many of the families who come to the program experience on a day-to-day basis and the supports and resources that those families have available to them. In some sites, program staff have personal experience mentoring a child, some of whom have an incarcerated parent or relative. By sharing their own experiences (e.g., about the children they mentor, the challenges these children may experience, and the successful aspects of

the relationship), they are able to more effectively recruit and enroll volunteers and support the match, particularly when volunteers are hesitant about mentoring a child with an incarcerated parent or family member.

- Staff training is seen as a critical program element across sites.

Program sites recognize that staff training is an important practice that can influence the quality of match support services. Consequently, sites have invested resources to develop the skills and competency of program staff serving children, families, and volunteers. A large portion of training opportunities are provided on-the-job by more experienced staff to enable newer staff to learn the organization’s service delivery model and approach. In some sites, program staff have access to professional development opportunities in their communities—e.g., training offered by other non-profit organizations—on behavioral topics and issues that affect children and youth and that can assist them in their roles with the volunteers and families. Nevertheless, continued training and professional development were identified as a priority resource need by all program staff. There was unanimous agreement among program staff that additional training would help them do a better job and increase their capacity to support the volunteers and families in the match.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The evaluation of the Amachi Texas program applied a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection over an 18 month period to explore the impact of one-to-one mentoring relationships on children affected by family incarceration. Nevertheless, there were some important limitations regarding the study findings.

The study was limited to a few Amachi program sites operating in several BBBS agencies in Texas. Although these results may be generalizable to other populations in Texas (i.e., because the study sites served 80 percent of mentored children in the state), the external validity of these findings beyond Texas has yet to be tested. Further, the results might not be applicable to mentoring programs operating outside of BBBS (i.e., with varying infrastructures, policies, and practices).

Baseline data were not collected in some cases until up to three months post-enrollment. It is possible that some program effects may have already accrued to children by the time these baseline data were collected, which would serve to underestimate the true effects of the Amachi program. In addition, although follow-up data were collected 6, 12, and 18 months post-enrollment, attrition rates were substantial at the 12 month and 18 month data collection time points. This limits our ability to take full advantage of the RCT design and attribute long-term findings to the presence of the Amachi program. Attrition rates at the 6 month time point, however, are sufficiently low to generate strong and valid conclusions.

Finally, although one goal of the study was to assess the satisfaction of mentors and mentees with the mentoring relationship, few data sources were available to measure satisfaction. Specifically, few volunteer mentors completed the online survey about their experience and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. Although the evaluation team used the Youth Satisfaction scale to measure mentee satisfaction with the relationship, the scale's low internal consistency ($\alpha=.44$) suggests some items in the scale may not be reliable measures of this construct.

KEY FINDINGS

This study was designed to test the impact of the Amachi Texas program on outcomes for children with an incarcerated parent. This section highlights key findings from the study, their practice implications, and general conclusions.

First, results of the Amachi program impact evaluation confirm that the greatest impact of the program was observed during the first six months of the mentoring relationship, and like previous research finds the presence of a caring, supportive adult mentor improves short-term outcomes for children. These characteristics included significant and positive differences in children's relationships with their parents/caregivers, their sense of self-worth/self-esteem, and sense of having a real future. These findings indicate that mentoring improves short-term outcomes for children affected by family incarceration.

Second, the evidence suggests that the impact of one-to-one mentoring on child-family relationships and child well-being outcomes is sustained and improves as the duration of the mentoring relationship increases. Children in mentoring relationships that lasted 12 months or longer reported a greater connection to school, community, and family. At 18 months, children with a mentor reported higher levels of self-worth/self-esteem than their peers and more positive perceptions about their ability to make friends. These children also reported stronger feelings about the presence of caring adults in their life. As the youth-mentor relationship developed across time, more and more children reported that the relationship was very youth-centered; they considered themselves very emotionally engaged in their relationship; and more children re-

ported being very satisfied in the relationship with their mentors.

Third, results of the Amachi study indicate that the presence of a mentor did not produce significant differences in children's academic/school related-outcomes. However, during the first year of the match, there was a continual decrease in the number of mentored children assigned alternative education programs for disciplinary reasons. These findings signify that in addition to mentoring, it is necessary to recognize children affected by family incarceration require strong problem-solving partnerships with parents/caregivers, teachers/schools, social service providers, and community organizations to expand the range of educational supports and resources available to the most vulnerable children and families.

Fourth, findings from the process evaluation of the Amachi program identify as critical elements of successful mentoring relationships the volunteer mentor's personal characteristics and acceptance of family incarceration issues, as well as parental involvement and support of the match. Finally, consistent with best practices on youth mentoring, program infrastructure and capacity, the role of the match support specialist are critical in the success of the mentor-mentee match.

DISCUSSION

Best practices in youth mentoring programs suggest that the most successful mentor-youth relationships exist for at least a year. However, only slightly more than half of the Amachi mentoring matches met the 12 month standard for the length of match. Given the critical role mentors can play in improving short- and long-term outcomes for children affected by family incarceration, it is imperative to thoughtfully address how

to prolong these relationships. Three key strategies stand out from the process evaluation findings that may be helpful in this regard.

First, children affected by family incarceration may have different needs and concerns than other at-risk populations. To be successful in a mentoring relationship with a child dealing with incarceration issues, volunteer mentors need access to training that goes beyond basic mentoring. Training for volunteers should focus on enhancing mentor's knowledge about the child's family circumstances, and the potential impact and implications of family incarceration on the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of children.

Second, parental involvement, support, and buy-in are critical to the success of the mentoring relationship. Accordingly, programs need to invest resources in parent/caregiver training and engagement. Training for parents/caregivers should focus on defining the role of the mentor vis-à-vis the parent/caregiver with the goal of setting expectations and demystifying fears where they exist. Similarly, the active engagement of parents/caregivers as key stakeholders in the match can help improve the relationship and communication between the volunteer, child, and parent/caregiver and other family members who can influence the mentoring relationship.

Moreover, program staff should also consider strategies for engaging the incarcerated parent - when s/he continues to play a role in the child's life—in the mentoring relationship. By engaging the incarcerated parent early and regularly throughout the life of the match, mentoring programs can minimize disruptions in the mentoring relationship that can be introduced when the

incarcerated parent returns home or is reintegrated into the child's life.

Third, mentoring programs need to develop coalitions with other providers in the community that can expand the range of supports and resources available to children and families and provide access to a broader pool of volunteers and mentors. Given that geographic proximity is a criterion during the match process, mentoring programs should look to establish partnerships in the communities where children live, with organizations that can serve as resources for volunteer recruitment. By matching children with volunteers from their own communities, programs can reduce the likelihood that matches will end due to geographic distance.

Together, findings from this study suggest the mentoring relationships established through Amachi Texas made a difference and positively influenced short- and long-term outcomes for children affected by family incarceration. Given the potential risk factors and long-term consequences of parental incarceration on children, these findings support the notion that mentoring programs are an important prevention strategy that merit further consideration.

We need more scalable programs like Amachi Texas that target the most at-risk population of children as well as supporting research on the effectiveness of such efforts. Specifically, more research is needed to understand the types of strategies that increase volunteer retention and support longer-lasting matches at the individual match-level.

ENDNOTES

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32 This particular collaboration as well as other research initiatives would play a key role in my decision to leave Vanderbilt University and accept the offer to come to the University of Pennsylvania and partner with Dilulio, as well as the opportunity to work with new colleagues at Public/Private Ventures.

33 Greater Exodus Baptist Church, located in north Philadelphia, would become one of the key churches to participate in the project.

34 Public/Private Ventures has a long and successful history of leading major demonstration and evaluation projects. To learn more about PPV's track record in leading projects such as Amachi or to review some of their publications go to: <http://www.ppv.org>.

35 See Linda Jucovy. 2003. *Amachi: Mentoring Children of Prisoners in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures and the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, University of Pennsylvania; see also Tracy A. Hartmann. 2003. *Moving Beyond the Walls: Faith and Justice Partnerships Working with High-Risk Youth*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

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41 Strikingly, 82 percent of Amachi mentors were African American and an additional 8 percent were Latina. In addition, 34 percent were African-American males—a significant percentage. For most mentoring programs, this is the most difficult group of volunteers to attract, and one that programs are most interested in recruiting so they can be paired with African-American male children who might otherwise be growing up without a supportive male adult of the same race who is a consistent presence in their lives.

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44 W. Wilson Goode, Sr., and Thomas J. Smith. 2005. *Building from the Ground Up: Creating Effective Programs to Mentor Children of Prisoners (The Amachi Model)*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

45 This project was supported by Grant No. 2007-JU-FX-0017 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

46 Discussion of the methodology and findings to follow draw heavily from the full report entitled *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* submitted to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention by ICF and Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion. Copies of the full report can be requested from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

47 Although the specific activities may vary from site to site, the functions are the same across BBBS agencies and across its many programs (i.e., the same for the Amachi community-based program and for the general community-based program).

48 Source for all tables and figures: *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program*.

49 Program staff referred to the wait list as the “ready to match” list.

50 A fourth site, Houston, underwent numerous organizational challenges that prevented the site's ability to participate in the evaluation.

51 The Austin site had limited staff capacity that affected the site's ability to recruit children for the study and to participate in data collection. All total, only 16 children enrolled in the study and completed the baseline survey. None of the children completed the follow-on surveys required for the evaluation.

52 Supporting materials included: a) a list of frequently asked questions detailing the purpose of the evaluation and its related activities; b) the roles and responsibilities of evaluation and program staff, and c) a timeline for the evaluation. This document included specific guidance to facilitate the assignment of children in a family group as well as a one-page handout for parents/caregivers outlining the implications and benefits of participating in the study.

53 Including children within this age group ensured that children were old enough to understand and independently complete the child survey and that older children (over 13) did not run the risk of being randomly assigned to the wait list and potentially age out of the program before they were matched with a mentor.

54 When members of a family group gave their consent to participate in the study (if all children qualified for Amachi) each completed the child survey. The parent/caregiver completed a survey for each child in the family group.

55 To determine the assignment of children in a family group, the person making the assignment selected the first child on the list from the family group and used the birth date table to randomly assign the child to the treatment or control group. Wherever the child fell on the list, his/her siblings were also placed on that list. Program staff maintained a list of all study participants including a designation of the child whose birth date was used to make the random assignment. This information was used to determine which children should be excluded from the final analysis sample.

56 It was also determined that children who were considered by a parent/caregiver or enrollment specialist as high risk or in great need of a mentor should not be offered the opportunity to participate in the evaluation and run the risk of being assigned to the control group (i.e., these children were excluded from the randomization process).

57 The large majority of the non-consenters (n=664) represented children served by BBBS Lone Star, the largest BBBS organization in the country.

58 See Appendix B in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for a full listing of all con-

structs.

59 See Appendix C in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for descriptive information on child survey and parent survey items.

60 Evaluation staff engaged in monthly activities to encourage completion of the volunteer mentor online surveys; however, few mentors completed the survey and a fewer number completed the four versions of the survey.

61 Specifically, the analytic methods that addressed the effectiveness of one-to-one mentoring included: simple treatment and control mean differences, application of univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) models to assess the statistical significance of these differences, and calculation of corresponding effect sizes (Glass's A).

62 A sufficient number of surveys were collected at the 6-month survey administration to meet the Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse standards of attrition rates in a randomized controlled trial study. In other words, the number of dropout cases at 6 months can be considered acceptable and did not create significant bias in the main impact analysis.

63 See Appendix D in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* which provides an examination of the representativeness of analysis sample.

64 Although the attrition rates of the exploratory analysis did not fall within the acceptable range for low attrition standards established by the What Works Clearinghouse, these findings point to the potential long-term impact of one-to-one mentoring for children with incarcerated parents or family members. Consequently, results from the exploratory analysis should be interpreted with caution given the bias that might be introduced by the significant attrition in the sample.

65 See Appendix E in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for site-specific findings.

66 The majority of cases in the Other category were children who identified as multi-racial.

67 The majority of cases in the Other category were parents/caregivers who identified as multi-racial.

68 Outcome measures are scaled 1 to 5; 1=Not at all true, 2=Not very true, 3=Neutral, 4=Sort of true, 5=Very true.

69 See Appendix F in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for the gender subgroup analysis of core outcomes. See also Appendix G for the ethnicity subgroup analysis of core outcomes.

70 Trend analyses were based on the sample of children that completed all follow-up surveys.

71 See Appendix H in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for the trend analysis by gender.

72 See Appendix F in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for the gender subgroup analysis of core outcomes.

73 Outcome measures are scaled 1 to 5; 1=Not at all true, 2=Not very true, 3=Neutral, 4=Sort of true, 5=Very true.

74 See Appendix F in *Mentoring Children Affected by Incarceration: An Evaluation of the Amachi Texas Program* for the gender subgroup analysis of core outcomes.

75 Trend analyses were based on the sample of children that completed all follow-up surveys.

76 Grossman, Jean. B. and Amy Johnson. 1999. *Assessing the Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs*. In J.B. Grossman, (Ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

77 The original instrument measures youth's dissatisfaction with the relationship. We reversed the scale of this construct to be consistent with the other two constructs and facilitate the presentation of the findings.

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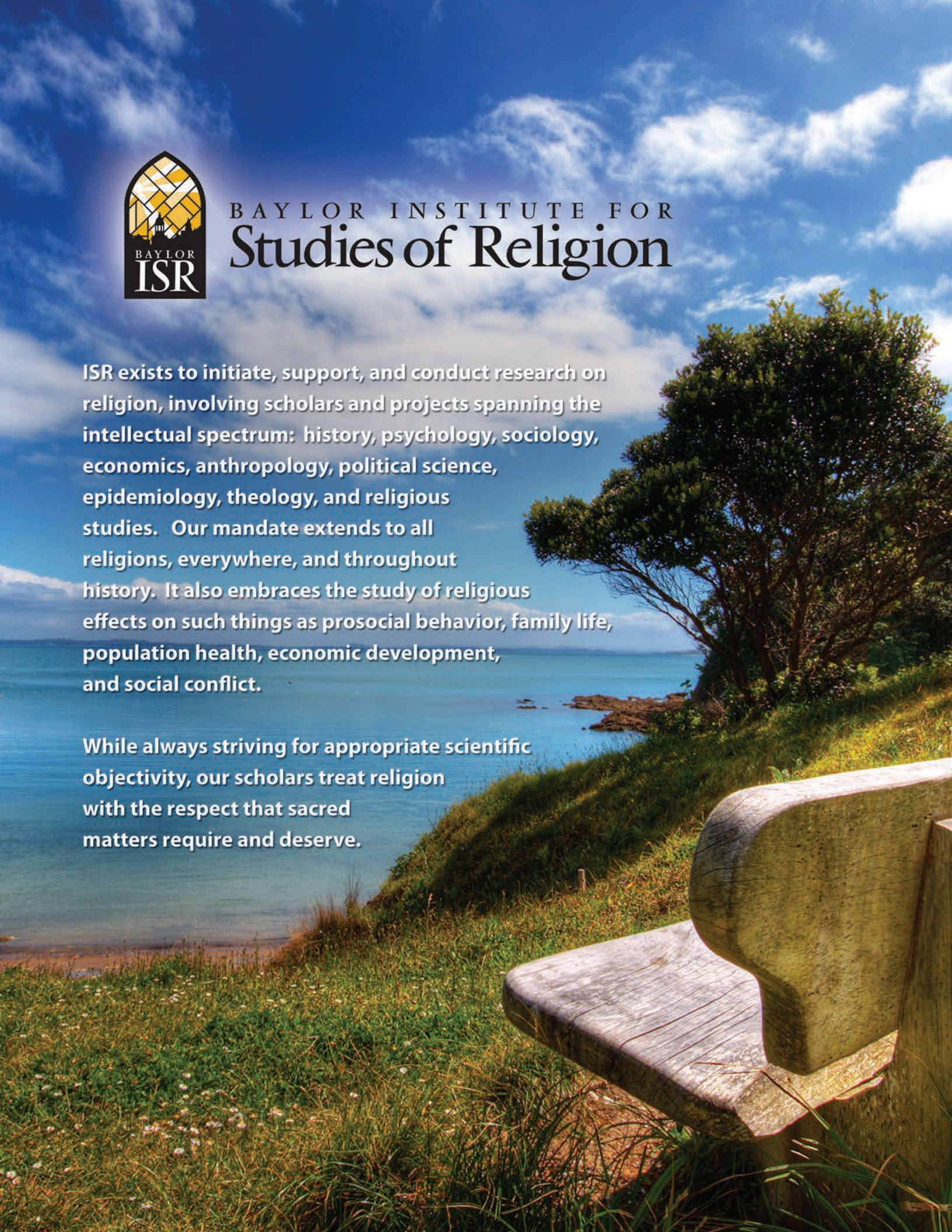
Byron Johnson is Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University. He is the founding director of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) as well as director of the Program on Prosocial Behavior. Johnson has just completed a series of studies on Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts and is launching a longitudinal study of Boy Scouts in collaboration with colleagues at Tufts University. Professor Johnson was the principal investigator on a recent project funded by the Department of Justice that resulted in a number of peer-reviewed publications on the role of religion in prosocial youth behavior. He is a former member of the Coordinating Council for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Presidential Appointment). Johnson is a leading authority on the scientific study of religion, the efficacy of faith-based organizations, and criminal justice. His newest book – *More God, Less Crime: Why Faith Matters and How it Could Matter More* – examines the influence of faith-based programs on crime reduction, prisoner reentry, and aftercare. Before joining the faculty at Baylor University, Johnson directed research centers at Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania. He is the 2013 Big Brother of the Year for Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star of Texas.



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