THE MENTORING OF MALE YOUTH:
A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION
TO SOCIETY

By

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ABSTRACT

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The argument has been made that boys and girls who have a mentor during their formative years will develop a sense of self-confidence that gives them a jump start in the process of growing up, providing a significant boost in the development of success in life. This thesis describes and expands on the values and characteristics of mentoring and its benefits to the mentor, the mentee, and to society in general. Further discussion includes changes in the role enactment of men in American society, plus the positive influence the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, a mentoring organization, has on boys and girls. A review of relevant literature suggests that mentored youth, in comparison with the un-mentored, show superior scholastic, societal, and economic progress.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter One: | Introduction ........................................ Page 1 |
| Chapter Two: | From Birth to Childhood: Development and Theories of George Herbert Mead ............. Page 5 |
| Chapter Three: | Review of Research Conducted by the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Inc........ Page 11 |
| | • About Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Page 11 |
| | • The Harris Interactive Study .................... Page 12 |
| | • The Cape Girardeau Study ....................... Page 14 |
| Chapter Four: | Socialization—How an Infant Becomes a Person... Page 16 |
| | • The Socialization Process ...................... Page 19 |
| | • Secondary Socialization—the Generalized Other in Motion................................. Page 22 |
| Chapter Five: | The Social Environment Creates the Individual.... Page 25 |
| Chapter Six: | The Magic of Mentoring ............................... Page 29 |
| Chapter Seven: | Conclusion ............................................. Page 33 |
| Bibliography... | ........................................................ Page 35 |
| Appendix A: | Harris Interactive Research .......................... Page 41 |
| Additional Reading... | ................................................. Page 44 |
CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTION

The subject of Mentoring is widely addressed within the educational community. A mentoring relationship is one where one person plays the role of a father or mother-like teacher and the other, usually younger or less experienced person is the protégé, or mentee (Roberts 1999). Andy Roberts (1999) wrote that there are mentors for authors, politicians, actors, musicians, business people, athletes, youth, and just about every profession or human endeavor where one can learn from the experience of another. He said that a mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor who can be counted on to display the qualities of counselor, teacher, nurturer, protector, advisor and role model (Roberts 1999).

This thesis is focused on the adult/youth mentoring relationship where the mentee is undergoing the secondary socialization associated with personality development between the ages six and sixteen. By age five or so a child has hopefully learned how to cope with basic bodily functions, knows how to communicate, and has begun the development of his or her personality (Ribble 1955). It is during the pre-adolescent years where a fine-tuning of the personality can help a youth develop a sense of self-assuredness that can be of great benefit in interaction with society. Since society is made up of its individuals each produces within the other a mirror-like reflection of the other so the quality of one leads towards a similar quality of the other (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs May 2003).

In this thesis I discuss the value of mentoring, the importance of the mentor in the developing individual, and the method by which the mentoring methodology takes place.
How does the mentoring process work? How is the child’s character formulated and what are the forces that create the evolving individual the mentor is assigned to work with. Put simply, how does a baby become a young person and then an accomplished adult person? Then, what are the influences that continue the development of personality. George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is today seen as an authority on the subject of the individual from a social scientist’s perspective.

The position of this thesis is that adult mentoring for adolescent boys and girls provides value to society as a whole. For the mentored individual the challenges of growing up in society are benefitted by having a good self-image and a high quality sense of self-esteem (Grossman and Garry 1997). The underpinning relational processes that occur in mentoring relationships have a depth of connection that is expected to last a lifetime (Spencer 2006). Social-psychological benefits discussed herein have a positive payback for people of all ages and genders, since a constructive outlook at life helps defeat self-destructive traits and gives one an assist against life’s various trials. My goal is to look inside the mechanics of mentoring to reveal a clearer view of what mentoring is all about and to find an improved understanding of the value and importance of a mentoring relationship. Such an approach will draw a clear vision of the short and long range rewards for the mentor, the mentee, and, importantly, society in general. The attributes discussed below will serve to provide youth a stable base, the groundwork upon which further growth of the mentee can be directed towards a productive and satisfying life.
With so many electronic gadgets available in modern society it is becoming difficult to remember and focus on what are truly the most traditionally meaningful and valuable things in life (Kimmel 1995). Here are some of life’s goals as put forth by Brother Oh Teik Bin, a simple Dhammaduta worker from Parak, Malaysia: “Overcoming fear and procrastination; the importance of a sense of humor; recognizing and overcoming one’s shortcomings; acknowledging strengths but being humble while not diminishing or denying them; [. . .] to make a living doing something we love” (Oh Teik 2010). That last is a great goal, though not as easy as it sounds. The sooner one can find something that he or she loves to do, and make a living at it, the better. To quote Dan S. Kennedy “Wealth won't find you if you are at home slouched on—or hiding under—the couch” (Kennedy 2006:72).

Whether by reading or talking, it is through human to human interaction that people learn about the important values of life. It is in human group life that occur these important “. . . standardized measures of human behavior and derive[d] causal statements concerning human conduct. . . .” (Prus 1996:77).

Nothing can beat the simple one-on-one mentoring of a trusted adult mentor/friend with a little person (Drexler 2005). Over time the repeated contact allows for the development of a new understanding of the seemingly small details that can produce such profound results and the power of adult/child mentoring is evidently very much being used and with positive results. In just three weeks a difference was made in primary socialization as reported in Michael Gurian’s Boys and Girls Learn Differently:
Teachers have found that the "best discipline method is one-on-one mentoring. She [the teacher] reported particular success with a second grade student who was creating major disruptions in the classroom. People nearly gave up on him, but she mentored him for three weeks. This mentoring proved to be quite successful; he has transitioned back into the classroom with ongoing mentoring from her. “He needed structure, attention, and positive reinforcement,” she says, “which I was able to provide in a one-on-one mentoring situation.” “Boys who are morally neglected have unpleasant ways of getting themselves noticed. All children need clear, unequivocal rules; they need structure” (Gurian 2001:162).

Without firm guidance and discipline from the adults in their lives children are adrift in a sea of options, and it appears that boys need these things even more than girls do (Sommers 2000). “A male’s propensity for antisocial behavior is significantly greater than the female’s holds true cross-culturally” (Sommers 2000:180). A 1997 University of Vermont study compared parents’ reports of children’s behavior in twelve countries. The countries studied (which included the United States, Thailand, Greece, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Sweden) differed greatly in how they defined gender roles. Yet in every case boys were more likely than girls to fight, swear, steal, throw tantrums, and threaten others (Sommers 2000).
CHAPTER TWO--FROM BIRTH TO CHILDHOOD: DEVELOPMENT AND THE THEORIES OF GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

While a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago from 1894 to 1931, Mead developed psychological theories that became Social Psychology and a root of the development of Sociology. Mead’s published works include, “Suggestions Towards a Theory of the Philosophical Disciplines” (Mead January 1910); “Social Consciousness and the Consciousness of Meaning” (Mead 1910); “What Social Objects Must Psychology Presuppose” (1910); “The Mechanism of Social Consciousness” (1912); “The Social Self” (1913); “Scientific Method and the Individual Thinker” (1917); “A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol” (1922); “The Genesis of Self and Social Control” (1925); “The Objective Reality of Perspectives” (1926); “The Nature of the Past” (1929); and “The Philosophies of Royce, James, and Dewey in Their American Setting.” After Mead’s death some of his students published his lecture notes, unpublished works, and student’s notes (Mead 1969).

Very young children are primarily a product of each their own emotional, economic and cultural environment (Petras 1968). In an essay on Mead’s social philosophy, George Herbert Mead: Assays on His Social Philosophy (1968), John W. Petras points out that a child is a product of its social and cultural environment and should be assigned virtually zero responsibility for the personality he or she has developed (Petras 1968). Mead says that there is a point “. . . where [the child] can take over responsibility and carry out things in his own way, with an opportunity to think his own thoughts” (Mead 1934:213). The parents, or anybody for that matter, can have a
great influence on the development of a child’s personality, both intentional and unintentional (Bailey 2002:155). Like the Salvation Army, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, and on an international playing field the American Peace Corps, the highest level of personal achievement is possible because of intentional human to human interaction. At many levels a group of two or more people becomes a social group. “A social organization is composed of social relationships, the community of people who voluntarily associate together for their mutual benefit and the organization that carries out the community’s goals” (Brueggemann 2002:245). Fortunate are those who can consider themselves mentors, to be the ones fine-tuning an older but still developing individual child through the sort of mentoring discussed in this thesis, roughly age six to sixteen. Fine tuning a child’s personality might at first glance appear to be effortless, but its attractiveness belies the effort and structure that makes positive mentoring work (Tierney and Grossman 1992-1993). In much of the world basic physical survival dominates life’s events, but in a more stable situation like we usually find in western nations there is still sometimes no time for such detailed enrichment of individual accomplishment.

The process of individualization, for Mead (Mead 1910), is also called the process of consciousness, is pre-eminently social. From the very beginning the individual child influences the society that surrounds it; as does the society affect the child (Berger and Berger 1972). Mentoring has a value, and in some small way our society will be a superior one as a result of the high quality mentor-mentee relationship described herein.
It has been said that society is composed of its individuals, but society and its individuals are in actuality the same object: “The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience” (Mead 1969). Mead (1910) had ideas about socialization, ideas that at the time he was lecturing at the University of Chicago established him as very popular with the students. Several other scholars have published ideas regarding socialization including Chaun R. Harper: “College men and Masculinities: Theory, Research, and Implications for Research”; and Jean Grossman and Eileen Garry’s “Mentoring--A Proven Delinquency Prevention Strategy.

Although a professor of philosophy Mead had wonderful insights regarding the structure of society. For example, “The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience” (Mead 1969:201) and “We are not, in social psychology, building up the behavior of the social group in terms of the behavior if the separate individuals composing it; rather, we are starting out with a given social whole of complex group activity, into which we analyze (as elements) the behavior of each of the separate individuals composing it” (P. 121). Since sociology was a still fairly new discipline at the time, he formulated ideas that became foundational in the structure and theories of sociology. Anselm Strauss (1916-1996) points out that it wasn't until 1939 that sociologists lit upon Mead's ideas about socialization, notably his concepts of generalized other and his rather striking socialized “self” (Strauss 1959:102). As sociologists we look at the individual in relationship to society as a whole. Mead noted with approval, for instance, Comte's conviction that we must advance from the
study of society to the individual rather than from the individual to society (Whiting 1963). The benefits that the individual reaps as the result of mentoring also benefit society as a whole (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs May 2003), (Strauss 1959), (Grossman and Garry 1997), (Berger and Berger 1972). Regardless of the fact that most of the problems our mentee has accumulated ultimately and originally came from society and the significant other, the mentoring process eventually helps improve that very same society.

Without guidance as to how to behave children get into problems, and this is especially true with boys. “Boys who are morally neglected have unpleasant ways of getting themselves noticed. All children need clear, unequivocal rules. They need structure. They thrive on firm guidance and discipline from the adults in their lives” (Sommers 2000:179).

Youth need to be taught the proper ways to behave in order to find harmony in their social life, whether it be in school, at play, at home, and anywhere they go into their social environment. Disruptive behavior is exactly that: their behavior effects their social environment. In modern society traditional “rites of passage” which, in many other human societies mark onsets between clearly defined stages of individual progress through life, don’t exist as they do today in some third world countries (Berger and Berger 1972:211). Before the industrial revolution and today’s industrial society and its institutional dynamics, the phenomenon of modern youth did not exist. The division of labor broke up the traditional family unit and youth were left on their own to figure things out (P. 215).
Although there are a huge variety of systems of specific social and cultural behavior, by the age a mentor comes into the individual’s life not a lot of damage will have been wrought and a wonderful level of social ability will have been accomplished (Whiting 1963). In 1954 researchers from three universities, Harvard, Yale, and Cornell, studied child socialization across six societies and the variables are extensive. For example, one mother might be shocked at the way another treats her child, but one thing is certain: each society creates its individuals through socialization, and although its individuals have some effect on their social environment, for the childhood and teen-age years it’s usually a miniscule amount.

In the University of Chicago classroom, while expanding on Charles Darwin’s (1809-1892) theory of evolution, Mead (1936) taught the following about socialization: “This [evolutionary] process flows not only through species but through societal organizations, the human included” (Mead:xix). As mentioned above, Mead (1936) sees societal organizations as “forms.” His view is, at the time, a new look at the structure of society as he applies evolutionary process to both societal and individual development. Mead’s students report that he said: “The difference between that conception of evolution and the modern conception is given, as I have already pointed out, in the very title of Darwin’s book, The Origin of Species, that is, the origin of forms” (Mead 1969:10).

Modern social theorists continue the exploration of socialization when discussing such themes as cultural reproduction, social integration, and patterns of societal evolution (Buechler 1995). Buechler writes that Dieter Rucht (1988) “. . . implies that modernization in the lifeworld produces conflicts around democratization, self-
determination, and individualization. . .” (P. 449). Contemporary society offers many new and more modern challenges to a youth’s successful development as an individual, and makes mentorship of more value than in the past because of extensive class conflicts. Of course, children today are much better off than they were in, for example, the days of the Spartans where children were raised in extremely harsh if not brutal fashion (Berger and Berger 1972).

Mead (1863-1931) didn’t publish during his lifetime but his students published many books posthumously by using their notes and Mead’s notes as the source of their material. We know that Mead saw the development of society and its individuals as a river-like flowing milieu of change. As mentioned above, Mead was heavily influenced by Charles Darwin (Mead 1969) and he asserts the primacy of the evolutionary process, which in Darwin’s day was the talk of the town. Mead brought the theory of evolution into his analysis of all “forms,” including the individual form and society’s form.

Society is a part of nature because it is composed of individuals, the human beings that are created in nature. In addition, at the macro or world-wide level, all of the forms that live on the planet are in constant adjustment one with the other. Today we have reached the point where the activities of the population of the planet are changing the makeup of the planet itself; it is called global warming. “The adjustment of the one to the other gives rise to the appearance of the different forms” (Mead 1936:128).
CHAPTER THREE—REVIEW OF RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF AMERICA, INC.

The majority of the framework for this thesis comes from research within the social psychological process of socialization based predominantly on the writings of George Herbert Mead, my experience as Big Brother mentor in the Big Brothers Big Sisters, Inc. organization (BBBS), and conversational interaction with my Little Brother. In addition there is substantiated verification of the value of mentoring, which is discussed in this chapter.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

As of June 2009 more than a quarter million children are served by the Big Brothers Big Sisters, which is headquartered in Philadelphia, and there are nearly 400 agencies across the country (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper 2002). Although there are few instantly recognizable and dynamic results of the mentoring process, the changes are substantial and are appreciated through recent research of the type of person into which each child evolves. The BBBS organization lovingly refer to their mentors and mentees as either a “Big” or a “Little” with the word brother or sister added as appropriate. In conversations with the little brother or sister and his mother one usually hears comments that tend to give qualitative proof that a big-little brother or sister partnership is being productive as time goes by. My experience has shown that during the days and years of the mentoring experience there are very few times that the two big/little friends openly speak of the complexities and the various advantages of the
mentoring relationship. “Mentoring is an inherently interpersonal endeavor” (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper 2002:267) and it is more of a friendship than a calculated and analytical process. Most of the time the two friends focus on whatever they are doing together rather than the meaning or value of the undertaking. For most mentors, by the time the little reaches sixteen he or she seems to be well on the road to success and has a good attitude. But it is difficult to put a finger on specific results. Kristen Pender (2009) of the Big Brothers Big Sister puts it well: "I've seen a lot of significant differences in these kids' lives. . . . Sometimes you see it at first and sometimes you see it later on down the line. You don't just see a miracle happening in front of your eyes" (West 2009). By looking at some actual survey material one can find statistical proof that there are positive results for boys and girls who join the BBBS mentoring program and by inference, along with other discussion in this thesis, proof that adult to child mentoring is a valuable service.

The Harris Interactive Study

A survey titled Big Brother Big Sister Adult Little Research was conducted for the BBBS by Harris Interactive between March 3\textsuperscript{rd} and April 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2009. A full methodology is available from Kelly Williams, BBBS Media and Public Relations, phone number 215-665-7795, or email Kelly.Williams@bbbs.org. In a June 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2009 Big Brothers Big Sisters Press Release, Judy Vredenburgh, President and Chief Executive Officer announced that this was the first large-scale examination of long-term benefits (Williams 2009).
The results of the Harris Interactive Study (See Appendix A) find that BBBS alumni were 75% more likely than non-alumni to have received a four-year college degree, 39% are more likely than non-alumni to have current household incomes of $75,000 or higher, and approximately two out of three (64%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with life compared to just one in three (35%) non-alumni (Williams 2009). Most of the children served were amongst America’s most socially vulnerable because of the status of their family and economic situation (Ribble 1955).

Although independent research had shown that mentoring improves the odds that children will better succeed educationally and socially, the Harris (2009) examination exposed data that suggests mentoring has “. . . the potential to break cycles too often associated with family and community poverty. Specifically, the cross-sectional study was commissioned by Big Brothers Big Sisters to gather evidence that its long-term structured mentoring program’s effects reach far beyond the time that children are enrolled in the program” (Williams 2009).

“Being in the program also taught Littles new things, influenced aspects of their education, and helped them to make better decisions over all” (Williams 2009). For example, over three quarters (77%) did better in school, and “. . . [a] significant majority of alumni are extremely or very satisfied with their relationships to friends (72%), family (65%) and spouses (62%)” (Williams 2009:8).

Whereas the above study looks at Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni who have reached adulthood, the following Cape Girardeau study looked at the differences in the attendance and grades of 5-17 year olds who are either in, or not in, the BBBS program.
The Cape Girardeau Study

A three-year study of students that attend Central Middle School in the town of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, a study which compared students enrolled in the Big Brothers Big Sisters with none-enrollees, found significant increases in attendance, as well as smaller but noticeable academic improvements. The Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri partnered with the cape Girardeau School District to collect data on students involved with the program (West 2009). A task force was created to find new systems of measurement and to determine various program effects on each of the 150 children to be tracked (Thompson 2008).

The data was collected over a three year period, and monitored absences, tardies, discipline referrals, reading level, and math grades. Children in the BBBS range in age from 5-17, an age range wherein good habits will become a part of the overall personality of the person. Data collected from the 2007-2008 school year showed 38.4 percent of the students had improved overall. “Of the students, 61.2 percent had fewer tardies, 54.3 percent had fewer absences, 17 percent had fewer discipline referrals, 26.9 percent received higher grades in reading classes and 19.2 percent received a higher grade in math class” (West 2009:1).

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide some statistical evidence that mentoring works. It is also very evident that through the analysis of some of the greatest social scientists quoted herein there exists a strong qualitative quality to the subject of mentoring. Quantitative evidence is valuable and is useful as a support of social analysis. George Herbert Mead did not need statistics to prove what became so evident through his
philosophical analysis and deductive processing of philosophy and social psychology.

Mead’s analysis of what makes a baby become a human, its socialization, reveals that the actions of the baby help it establish itself as a person. As this baby grows older, through formal or informal mentoring, the outcome of an improved personality is confirmed through the use of statistics.

Among modern adults growing awareness of the precarious situation of our children has encouraged more people to volunteer as mentors (Tierney, Grossman, and Resch 1995). “In January 2008, nearly 32,000 Americans inquired about becoming Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors compared to just over 25,000 last year, an increase of 25 percent” (Tierney, 1995:283).
CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIALIZATION—HOW AN INFANT BECOMES A PERSON

“For Better or for worse, all of us begin by being born” (Berger and Berger 1972:45). When we are born nature does not provide people with any social customs, characteristics, language, or tendencies; we are a clean slate so-to-speak. Our brain, empty except for instructions for the autonomic nervous system, is ripe for input as to whatever individual characteristics our environment suggests we adopt. When a mentor finally encounters his or her charge, the child has already been shaped by numerous social forces, and much of the mentee’s personal story and personality is based on the life’s story of their relations and adaptations towards and with social others (Eastin, 2003; Mead, 1969; Knight, 2005; Prus, 1996; Bailey, 2002.)

There are many functions of the human organism that have nothing to do with society. From birth “. . . one experiences hunger, pleasure, physical comfort or discomfort and so forth” (Berger and Berger 1972:45), but the experience of society also begins at birth. The child’s social experience is in constant flux, that is, being added to and modified by others; all a part of his social experience. In order to experience being a member of society the child must have contact with other people. “His experience of others is crucial for all experience” explain Peter L. Berger and Brigitte Berger (1972). The experience is total submersion into the environment and there is both mental and physical cross-over in how the infant adjusts. For example, the sensation of hunger is an autonomic function and yet “. . . if the child is fed at certain times, and certain times only, the organism [the child] is forced to adjust to the pattern” (Berger and Berger 1972:45), so the social environment not only graphically influences social behavior but can actually
impose changes on the internal processes of the child’s stomach. Indeed all of the physiological processes and social habits that are a part of the organism are subject to the same impositions; that is, there is a constant back-and-forth exchange between developing children and the people within their environment with the primary flow of information at first being from the macro to the micro. In the book * Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century* George Herbert Mead is quoted: “The structure of society lies in these social habits, and only in so far as we can take these social habits into ourselves can we become selves” (Mead 1936:375).

A mother is not only heavily influenced by her own immediate environment as to what times the child should be fed—when the baby cries or only at family eating times—but always by the social norms as she has been taught and procedures she therefore adheres to (Berger and Berger 1972). Perhaps the social custom is to feed the baby at a certain hour three times a day or at whatever times that the baby cries, but whatever the influence, she has learned the proper action according to the instructions of her social environment. Likewise, the father also will treat the child according to his perception of what accomplishes the social norm, or the same way he was raised and taught to participate in family events (Bly 1990). Although the child experiences a micro-world, that world is a part of a macro-world of which he will later become more familiar. “[T]his invisible macro-world, unknown to him, has [already] shaped and predefined almost everything he experiences in his micro-world” (Mead 1936:47).

Around the world youth experience similar problems, since there exists a universality of adolescence if the criteria are biological, such as puberty, but if the criteria
are based on sociocultural phenomena then there is no specific universality (Manaster 1977). Regardless of what cultural environment is involved, it is through social patterns that an individual learns to become a member of that society, and this is called socialization (Berger and Berger 1972). In an absolute sense the child has no choice but to be imposed upon by the individual peculiarities of the adults encountered, because not only is there no choice, but a child has no capability of making a choice. Thus, if there is any great discrepancy or disharmony within the cultural environment that is forming the socialization, great psychological stress will be part of the essence of the child’s development, and socialization will be impeded through the overwhelming power and expectation of adults along with the child’s lack of knowledge of alternatives.

The child is surrounded by adults and will be influenced by two primary groups of adults: those nearest to the child’s world, which are of central importance, and the next set of adults called the “significant others.” The latter are close family members and are a part of the inner circle of influence. From where there is a repeated influence comes the shaping of the personality of the child and therefore the young person (Orville G. Brim and Wheeler 1966). Significant others play a major role in the drama of socialization and they are very important in the evolution of what happens to the child (Strauss 1959). Along the way the child discovers that specific reactions to his actions carry beyond, for example, his mother, and soon learns to relate to others who are in a larger circle than the immediate family. Berger and Berger (1972) use the example of a child who soils him or herself, that it is not only the mother who is angry “. . . but that anger is shared by every other significant adult that he knows, and usually by the adult world in general. It is at
this point that the child learns to relate not only to specific others but to a generalized other which represents society at large.” Slowly but surely the child becomes a personality that matches that of the individuals and the people of its surroundings. In addition, and of great importance, is the internal dialogue that the youth has with himself/herself because the characteristics of that inner dialogue are derived from material learned from his/her social surroundings, which then becomes the composition of the conversation within; a part of role-playing, which is of a copy-cat nature. Eventual behavior is a consequence of the social organization within which the personality is forming (Manaster 1977).

The Socialization Process

How does the socializing information get transferred between the adults and the child if no obvious use of language is involved, as is the case if the child doesn’t yet know how to use language? “A crucial step is when the child learns (in Mead’s phrase) to take the attitude of the other” (Berger and Berger 1972:54). In the process of adapting the values of the surrounding society and becoming an essential member of it, Mead (1934) says that “. . . [I]n so far as the child does take the attitude of the other and allows that attitude of the other to determine the thing he is going to do with reference to a common end, he is becoming an organic member of society” (Mead 1934:159). A mentor helps the child adapt with characteristics that will enhance the features of its socialized individuality, its personality, with attitudes that will help provide successful participation and membership in his/her social community (Belle 1989).
One way that a child attunes to his or her society through role-playing is by participating in games, especially important once the child has the ability to self-reflect with the use of language (Mead 1969). The child begins to talk to other children and adults, but also begins to talk to itself. Today, specifically in a modern society with a television that is turned on almost all of the time, we are happy to see a child playing with toy soldiers or with dolls, and see that the child is obviously having some sort of conversation out loud, a reflection of what’s going on in its head. At some point the child will begin observing characters on television and will be interested in copying those characters and activities. A child imitates what he has seen by role-playing, by copying what he has seen and repeating to himself what he has heard (Aboulafia 1986). When we observe a child we can’t really know what’s going on in that little head but we can make an educated guess after making an analysis of the child’s sociality (p. 94). The importance in role-playing lies not so much in whatever the specific role might be but that the child is learning to play and perform various actions, since role-playing is important. In role-playing patterns of conduct are learned, patterns that lie beneath the overall socialization process. The specific patterns of his or her particular environment will have their unique iron grip upon the individual self that the child becomes. For example, if a child plays the role of a policeman, it will be different for a white suburban child than for a black child of the inner city; similarly the game of cowboys and Indians will appear different to a child on an Indian reservation than to a white suburban child (Berger and Berger 1972).
Before the advent of television and before the existence of the extremely structured society in which we, as members of a modern society, live, “... work did not take up as much time during the day” and “games and amusements extended far beyond the furtive moments we allow them [today]: they formed one of the principle means employed by a society to draw its collective bonds closer, to feel united” (Aries 1962:73).

In yesteryear, when playing together, children could find the time to role play as doctors, firemen, nurses, mothers, and other characters they had seen in their neighborhood. Today, the “other” members of the playgroup might well be on television. Of course, there is time for group interaction and play in the classroom, and hopefully the parents take the child outside into nature and allow their child to experience other social events.

Although socialization is a shaping or molding process, it is not solely one-way from adult to child; even the very young child has some participation and, therefore, some influence in its process. For example, to varying degrees the parents are re-shaped by the experience; the child soon starts to control the parents and eventually begins to talk back to the adults. The important point is that the child has learned behavior patterns that might not be conducive to prime social interaction and it is the role of a mentor to instill patterns of personality that will help the young man or woman better cope with social interaction (Göncü 1999).

Once the child becomes a person, has developed a personality that is self-aware and has a self-image, then regardless of whatever the social environment has been, that social environment has been the source of the self’s primary socialization (Orville G. Brim and Wheeler 1966) It’s self is a product of the other selves surrounding it. Around
age five a secondary socialization takes over and maintains the self as it takes on new roles, sloughs off old ones, and develops a more adult-like personality (Manaster 1977).

Secondary Socialization—the Generalized Other in Motion

The secondary socialization process never ends, although it takes on different forms in different environments and organizations, such as college and graduate schools, as a lifetime progresses (Orville G. Brim and Wheeler 1966) Primary socialization forms the initial self, and then this self begins to become its own other and begins to influence itself. An internal dialogue with the self begins and the individual selects from choices and shapes its own self’s socialization process. The new person’s life, in the “becoming” motion of the new self, is influenced not only by continuing interaction with the social environment but by a new being: itself. Consciousness is not really a movement but it is being created, a sort of downward plunge, “. . . it is a kind of “motion” that is unable to go anywhere . . .” (Heidegger 1996:xv) It becomes an intense situation when the generalized other begins to teach and guide the child in activities beyond language, behavior, and all other actions of social interaction.

The intensity and scope of initial primary socialization decreases as we age. Activities such as walking, talking, washing, eating, and interaction with other people become second nature, but secondary socialization can be seen to continue into adulthood as we enter new social worlds (new jobs, new family roles, new memberships, adapting to aging and or chronic illness, etc.).
Socialization imparts basic social rules, forming training that allows primary socialization and consequent secondary socialization, which, in turn, facilitates the taking on of new roles more easily and productively. A growing infant must pay constant attention to manners, behaviors, protocols, the very things the mentor can later teach and fine tune, so that when the mentee becomes an adult, habituated and acceptable manners will be prevalent. Therefore, rather than battling an adverse sociological environment, freedom is provided to harmoniously learn the specifics of a new job, a marriage, or any social undertaking. To this end it is imperative that the adolescent have access to a mentor who will see him or her through this difficult, demanding, and potentially critical time of life. Future success or failure may well depend on a mentoring that provides a loving, growing, and learning relationship.

At this time in life, and indeed throughout an entire lifetime, it’s not the parent, the primary socializer, nor even some members of a peer group (who can also be desocializers), nor is it solely other members of the generalized other nor the mentor that take precedence in the becoming of the individual. Each individual is a mirror image of its society, which arises from the self (Deegan 2001), and it is from an internal dialogue that the individual with its personality is formed. Self-consciousness is where self-introspection occurs, and as one responds to input from outside influence, the other, this inner reflection is crucial to the development of the self. The information coming in is the psychic material of the created self. For each of us the information we accumulate becomes the very “stuff” of our personality. “It is only by turning to view one’s responses from the perspective of the other and the, or a, generalized other, that one comes to have
a self” (Aboulafia 1986:52). A mentor can provide, through language and action, substance worthy of such a responsibility. Too much social garbage is often the norm in modern society. Through simple role-playing simple gestures can have as much impact as the spoken word.

As this thesis champions, the perfect example of a most valuable member of this so influential a part of socialization is the mentor, who in so many ways, in so many forms, and at so many levels, is an advocate for the best in instituting a rewarding secondary socialization.

If general knowledge of the immense clout of the influences of socialization were well known and if most adults were aware that they are literally responsible for creating an individual, hopefully they would want to give this new individual, this child, the criteria that will best prepare them to do well in society. If the most immediate surroundings of the child, the family, is comprised of harmony and peace, then the child has a better chance to become a successful member of society, whereas in a tumultuous and even dangerous environment, the struggle for relative success in adaptation faces problems. Fortunately, knowledge of the importance of a stable environment exists in authoritative circles and today, laws are in place to protect a child from forms of mistreatment and abandonment that can ruin any normal socialization (Horowitz, Subotnik, and Matthews 2009). Laws preventing child abuse and the provision of education first became a part of the social fabric in the 1820s, subsided, and then the infant school system became very prevalent in the 1850s.
CHAPTER FIVE--THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT CREATES THE INDIVIDUAL

In this thesis the discussion of self-esteem, and its many synonyms, is referring to a sincere and deeply rooted sense of self-esteem, not of the braggadocio sort. Certainly, it is important to note that there is a down side to a strong sense of self-esteem if it is misdirected. Baumeister, Roy F., Jennifer D. Campbell, Jaochim I. Krueger, and Kathleen D. Vohs authored *Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?* (American Psychological Society, 2003, Vol. 4, Issue 1, Pages 1-44). The effect of self-esteem is complicated by several factors. For example, people with high self-esteem can also be “...people who frankly accept their good qualities along with narcissistic, defensive, and conceited individuals. Efforts to boost the self-esteem of pupils have not been shown to improve academic performance and may sometimes be counterproductive. Occupational success may boost self-esteem rather than the reverse” (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs May 2003:1-44). A sense of high self-esteem might be the *result* of good grades rather than the reverse.

But true self-esteem, the kind I am discussing in this paper, is not thinking that you are better than others, but rather, it is the feeling of a sincere quiet confidence in the face of a task. Baumeister (2003) seems to be talking about an artificial self-esteem, the bravado that is often put on when deep down there is self-doubt, a type of self-esteem that says "I am the best, there are no better and, therefore, no matter what I do or how I do it I will succeed." Those are the ones who exaggerate their successes and good
traits. If a person says to himself, "I am not very good, but by golly I'm going to give it my best" then he will probably succeed. And if he says "I am the best so I don't really have to try very hard" then he may succeed at first but as those who try harder catch up he may find himself falling behind.

Real self-esteem will lead to good performance and yes, success can boost self-esteem. The two are mutually interactive although other factors influence any sense of success or failure, such as an individual’s level of self-perceived control over his/her circumstances (Callicoatte 2008). A narcissist does not really have self-esteem, but he does have an inflated vision of what he "should" be (Behary 2008). All the bad effects of this supposed self-esteem that Baumeister (2003) speaks of are the result of artificial self-esteem, a self-esteem label that a person applies to himself whether or not it is warranted. “These narcissistic forms of behavior are a direct result of childhood where the child was, and is, a spoiled child, an overly dependent child, a lonely child, and a deprived child” (Behary 2008:14). In fact, a person with true self-esteem doesn't really think about self-esteem as such because his self-esteem is not based on performance. People who can accept themselves as they are don’t need to prove that they are special and can go about their lives enjoying life and meeting challenges as they come up—with a sense of confidence and adventure. This is the goal of the adult to youth mentoring discussed in this thesis. Since society is made up of its individuals, as are the institutions that also make up society—corporations, governments, schools, businesses—when they function in a healthy way, we are all better off.
The human developmental characteristics that I describe later in this document are of a general philosophical and psychological nature and are not intended as cases of individual psychology. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), considered by many to be the father of sociology, acknowledged the importance of “a formal psychology,” which is common ground between psychology and sociology: “All sociology is a psychology, but a psychology sui generis” (Durkheim 1982:247). In a video called Artist of the Soul directed by Werner Weik, Carl Gustav Jung, the psychologist says that if an individual is not really renewed in its spirit, society cannot renew itself, and that society is the sum of its individuals (Weick 1991).

The great thing about mentoring is that it does work (Mecca 2001; Mecca, Smelser, and Vasconcellos 1989; Strauss 1959). While using their own experience and education, if someone takes the time to share and teach someone else, be it one of many kinds of mentoring, the rewards can be life changing, sometimes turning a fellow human being’s life around. A down side of mentoring is that bad mentoring can produce bad consequences. Boys mentoring boys in gangs can compound personality problems when poor suppositions result in poor results (Kimmel 2008). One result of boys joining gangs is that they may well receive mentoring, feel wanted and useful, and be given other forms of guidance. In Guyland, The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men, Michael Kimmel writes “Today’s young men are coming of age in an era with no road maps, no blueprints, and no primers to tell them what a man is or how to become one” (Kimmel 2008:42). It is a miserable situation when male youth, with little or no adult supervision, mentor other boys: youth mentoring youth. The consequence of such a situation can manifest in
violence as the boys test their newfound knowledge. “They use violence when necessary to test and prove their manhood, and when others don’t measure up, they make them pay” (Kimmel 2008:57). Those boys and girls between six and sixteen who are lucky enough to be mentored by adults are fortunate to have someone who is truly interested in their welfare and success, and to reap the benefits and have the gift of a friend who is a potentially trusted, deep and honest best of friends. After a feeling of trust has been established and the mentoring occurs, later, when they are older and they reap the rewards of the relationship, of the mentoring, they will have experienced its value, and the cycle will continue because as adults they will hopefully pass on the same advantage to a younger man or woman.

Throughout history, in the Western World, children were often treated and looked upon as little adults (Berger and Berger 1972). Once the child is over seven years old it has the ability to walk, talk, eat, and perform other functions of comfortable living, but in modern society it is still considered to be far from being an adult. During the next seven years the now young person will become more aware that there are alternatives to the social environment within which it finds itself. Hopefully, he or she will find an adult who will be a guide through this next new era of discovery and continued socialization. The younger child is still totally at the mercy of the cultural environment. During the beginning of secondary socialization the individual begins to sense the ability to control his/her own development. Long before any ability (or permission) to make many meaningful choices, in many cases the mother will lead the way towards and introduce the opportunity for mentoring.
CHAPTER SIX--THE MAGIC OF MENTORING

Mentoring works on many levels including teaching and in the trades and continues well into adulthood. The effect of mentoring on the parent, child, the mentor him/herself, and the community as a whole can be seen in the most recent (2009) *Adult Little Research on Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Alumni* (See Appendix A). Just the fact that a boy is actually enrolled in a mentoring program such as the BBBS program is a great accomplishment (usually initiated by his single mother) and eventually the Little Brother will almost always appreciate the friendship and the advantages brought about by the relationship. Catching the boy early is the ideal situation, because although once a part of the personality, character personality traits are difficult though not impossible to change (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs 2003). As the boy becomes a man he is less likely to want to admit he has or needs a mentor because seeking help has a social stigma. Once in college, mental health services are typically underutilized by college men who are socialized to believe that seeking help is an admission of weakness (Harper and Lewis 2010). Research shows that men, upon looking back, found their big-brother/little-brother relationships to be very rewarding (Harper and Lewis 2010).

We each, as individuals, in so many ways, create the world in which we live, and so by giving of oneself, the mentor, by even the simplest acts of caring and showing interest provides an opportunity through which the individual mentee’s higher inner self will grow. A mentor is a wise and trusted friend and guide. The mentor/mentee relationship is a supportive, nurturing relationship between an adult and a youth.
Mentoring has been shown and has been studied and developed to facilitate the youth’s educational, social, and personal growth (Knight 2005). Thus, through general schooling and education some progress can be made, but through mentoring something special takes place; the individual’s self can flower, thereby contributing to a beautiful fragrance we all can share. As human beings age and mature many, but not all of them, lose or learn to adapt and control anxiety; this sense of freedom from anxiety is what some people want to share with a young person.

Within the relationship of a mentor and his mentee, a bond usually forms that includes trust (LEARNS June 2004). By doing the simplest things together, by spending simple unstructured time together, the two friends can experience the joy of living free from too many rules and regulations.

Within a family there are supposed to be present certain conditions, or rules, especially between the parents and their son or daughter (Aries 1962; Erikson 1963). Some of the rules are for safety but many of the rules are often of a traditional nature. Parents are expected to make rules and are presumed to not be doing a good job if they don’t enforce the rules (Neubert 2004).

With a mentor the youth has someone in whom he can confide if he so desires, can ask questions that he is reluctant to ask a parent, have fun with, without any obligations or expectations (Knight 2005). He or she senses a feeling of value, of worthiness, of being able to make a difference; he can experience a time of no stress, can interact with an adult, and, hopefully, upon his return to his home can help his parent relax and become a better parent because communication will be less strained. The
child’s vision and his perceptive horizons have grown. For the youth, society is becoming a good place to be and interaction with its individuals is a pleasure, rather than a source of grief.

A mentor can be more productive than a father, especially if the father is busy working to keep a roof over his children’s head. Although the old family setting of the father being the sole provider is changing, this is still the case in many situations. The mentor seems strong, self-confident. He probably is, otherwise he would not have had the courage, desire, or reason to be a mentor. Something may have happened in his life to make him feel he has learned a lesson, something he wants to share. He has a joy for life, mirrors this to his Little Brother and in unexpected ways is rewarded. Sometimes barely a word is spoken by the mentee, but the boy’s mother may confide in the mentor as to how appreciative the child is regardless of his lack of verbal dexterity or reason to express it.

Often, in today’s family the father himself needs to work on his own personality; he is not automatically of almost hero status, filling a large space in a room as fathers did in the nineteenth century. Today’s father sometimes seems weak and insignificant. “Some welcome this, but without understanding all its implications” (Bly 1990:98). For example, the father is shown as an object of ridicule on television (Cross 2008). Having watched these examples of fatherhood play out, how does a son imagine his life as a man? Where does he look for a model? Television and movie characters are written by writers who want to catch our attention, sell movies or sitcoms, get a laugh, and shock us. It would be mentally healthier for a boy if he could assume a role or some sort of character, and simply play the role; but no script is written and we each must create his or
her own personal characteristics. We read about the trauma adults experience when they lose their jobs. They become a “nobody” because they have based their entire identity on the role they have been playing such as soldier, fireman, construction worker, and so on. We expect our children and young people to “be” without the slightest advice on how to do it. The most seemingly confident adult can fall apart with the loss of a job simply because he loses the identity he had assumed and to which he had become accustomed, and on which he had based his existence: that on which his authority, his identity, even his personality was based while matching the role as defined by a job or career.

Hopefully, families and mentors alike will repeat to children early and often that their “job” while in school is to be a student, and that they are a guest in their parent’s home. A young person is usually not expected to pay money for room and board until turning eighteen years old, but often this simplest technique of adult guidance is overlooked and parents try to force their kids to create an identity “out of the blue.”

The argument can be made that a good father should find a mentor for his son, because it is rare for a father to be a good mentor: “... every father is set apart, not only from his wife, but from his children” (Bly 1990:120). A father’s role is not so much to provide an awakening of the Inner Self, as to put a roof over the family; that role is changing today as more women become the primary wage earner. The wise parent will let their child experience life through a trusted friend or relative such as an uncle or an aunt, or even better, someone with the specific role of mentor, which would provide no agenda other than unconditional friendship. Children often love to be with an uncle, aunt, or grandparent, because there are fewer of the same old boring rules.
CHAPTER SEVEN—CONCLUSION

So often many of the most important things in life are ignored by the main media outlets and are not a part of the mainstream conversations of society. Yes, society is made up of its individual persons, but there is more: part of the character of society includes corporations, and as repeatedly reaffirmed by the United States Supreme Court, “a ‘person’ is defined to include ‘corporations and associations existing under or authorized by the laws of the United States’” (U. S. Supreme Court, 5/27/2003, (15 U.S.C. 7: Sherman Act, 12(a): Clayton Act). Society is also made up of its institutions and other bodies, which although they have no physical presence are none-the-less found everywhere: ethnic biases, socio-economical prejudices, ethical judgments of all sorts. It’s no wonder that so much individual potential is ignored by society? Human behavior is very sensitive to and strongly influenced by its environment and it easy to feel overwhelmed by it all.

Within each of us hides a little deity, a little piece of a Higher Power, which if and when we can first discover and become aware we have something “there,” we can then secondly help nurture it, can find an inner strength that is not just based on what we are told, but something we can begin to experience after repetitive self-reference: we find a base, a foundation upon which to build and overcome the feeling that all odds are stacked against us, to conquer a sense of self-denial and self-loathing. We awaken a Little Buddha within us. The Tibetan Scholar Lama Surya Das writes: “The radical and compelling message of Buddhism tells us that each of us has the wisdom, awareness, love, and power of the Buddha within; yet most of us are too often like sleeping
Buddhas” (Das 1997). This inner power can help us overcome the outrageous trials we’ve been and will be accorded.

Most successful people will say that they could not have achieved success alone, but we so often launch children off into pre-school, kindergarten, and secondary school with blinders on, hoping everything will turn out alright. Just get through it and come home educated: “Get a good grade,” that’s the bottom line: prepare for college. Children who leap ahead and advance beyond their own vision (or even their parent’s vision) are so often led by someone who took the time to connect with them.

In his book *Outliers: The Story of Success* Malcolm Gladwell (2008) notes that the biggest misconception about success is that we do it solely on our smarts, ambition, hustle and hard work. But there are a lot more variables involved in an individual's success than whatever they undertake themselves. A mentor can teach a young person that not everything that happens to a person is up to that person (Donahue 2008). There’s a lot of plain old luck involved in life’s development, and being mentored is one of the lucky breaks for a girl or a boy. The fact that a boy or girl’s mother took the time and had the courage to sign up with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program really comes as an act of love. That love continues through the mentor/mentee relationship. A good mentoring friendship has a lot of love in it, and with more love between its individuals, society can become a better place in which to live. Like the wind, like gravity, we know love exists even though we can’t see it, but we can see the results, and it doesn’t matter what we call it: for now, calling it a good mentoring friendship will be sufficient.
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APPENDIX A

Adult Little Research on Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Alumni

By Harris Interactive Research (2009)

Breakthrough Study Finds Adults Mentored as Children in Big Brothers Big Sisters are Better Educated and Wealthier than Peers

AMONG THE STUDY’S SPECIFIC FINDINGS:

- Alumni were 75% more likely than non-alumni to have received a four-year college degree (28% of alumni vs. 16% of non-alumni).

- Alumni were 39% more likely than non-alumni to have current household incomes of $75,000 or higher (46% of alumni vs. 33% of non-alumni).

- A majority of alumni are extremely or very satisfied with their relationships to friends (72%), family (65%) and spouses (62%). Fewer non-alumni report the same level of satisfaction (46%, 50% and 40%, respectively).

- Approximately two in three (64%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with life compared to just over one in three (35%) non-alumni.

- A majority of alumni (62%) perceive themselves to have achieved a higher level of success than their peers who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters. Furthermore, this is twice as many as the 31% of non-alumni who report being more successful than other people they grew up with.

- Adult Littles are more likely than non-alumni to be engaged in their community over the past 12 months, particularly when it comes to volunteering (52% vs.
35%, respectively) and holding a leadership role in an organization working on an issue (29% vs. 16%, respectively).

- In the overall picture there are three key findings: Adult ex-mentees (people now in their thirties) “. . . having been in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program as a child results in genuine positive outcomes. They are more likely than non-alumni (people who were not in the BBBS program) to be confident, more educated, and to feel successful and satisfied with life. As shown in previous Big Brothers Big Sisters research, having a longer or more meaningful match with a Big oftentimes correlates with more positive outcomes” (Williams 2009:7).

- Other highlights from the research include the following information: Over six in ten (62%) alumni (Littles) consider themselves to be more successful than their peers who weren’t involved in the program; almost all (90%) agree that their Big made them feel better about themselves; 85% say being a Little has influenced them to have confidence in their abilities; 90% say their Big provided stability when they needed it and changed their perspective on what they thought possible in life (81%), and three-quarters (77%) set higher goals than they would have on their own, because of their Big.

- The researchers directed their questions at adult alumni of the BBBS but had not tracked these same individuals from youth through to adulthood. Therefore, as explained in the report, “. . . it is important to note that differences between alumni and non-alumni do not establish causation (i.e., program involvement is the cause for adult little’s attitudes, achievements and behavior), but rather a
correlation (i.e., program involvement is associated with adult little’s attitudes, achievements and behavior)” (Williams 2009:6). But the researchers carefully controlled “. . . certain demographics like gender, age and race. . . [and] other characteristics while growing up (location and safety of neighborhood, family composition, and childhood household relative financial situation) in order to minimize the likelihood that differences we see in what the results are due to differences in demographics or characteristics of childhood life” (ibid).

METHODOLOGY

Between March 3 and April 16 2009, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 449 adults, 200 of whom participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters as “Littles” for at least one year during their childhood and 249 who never participated in the program. Alumni Littles were sampled from a combination of Harris Interactive’s panel of respondents and Big Brothers Big Sisters lists. All 249 of the non-alumni were sampled from the Harris Interactive panel of online respondents. The non-alumni segment allows for a comparison between Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni and adults who had a similar profile as youth but who did not have a Big Brother or Big Sister as a youth. A full methodology is available:

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ADDITIONAL READING


