How School-Community Partnerships Contribute to Widespread Volunteer Mentoring with Youth: 
A Study of Environmental Change in Three Communities 
by 
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Abstract
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Nationwide, community leaders are promoting greater amounts of mentoring - one type of caring relationship between an adult and a younger person - as one way of improving youth academic, social, and personal development. Few empirical data exist to show how to create and sustain the community conditions to increase the number of volunteer adult mentors for youth. This study examines how school-community partnerships function as catalysts to create the conditions for community-wide volunteer mentoring and the degree to which partnership-facilitated environmental changes may be related to new volunteer mentors. Three school-community partnerships were selected from a new initiative to increase mentoring with youth in a bi-state, metropolitan area. Partnership directors were trained to use a documentation system to report the start of partnership-facilitated environmental change (i.e., new or modified programs, policies and practices to promote mentoring). Every month, directors also reported the number of new mentors. A multiple times series design across partnerships was used to evaluate the pattern of monthly environmental change and its association to new mentors over four years. The total amount of environmental change facilitated by each partnership ranged from 80 to 190, and the total number of new mentors ranged from 512 to 910 during the study. The cumulative monthly rates environmental changes and new mentors appear to covary; this positive association exists across all partnerships. An analysis of the distribution of environmental changes showed greater use of school and business sectors of the community, and behavioral change strategies of creating opportunities to engage others in programs or activities and facilitating support from influential leaders in the community. School-community partnerships may act as a catalyst for environmental changes that may be related to greater rates of new volunteer mentors, however, study methods did not rule out potential confounding variables such as seasonal trends and media events promoting mentoring outside of the Initiative. Despite methodological limitations, case studies of such school-community partnerships may help us understand and improve their capacity to create community conditions that promote widespread engagement of adults in caring relationships with youth.
Dedication

Dedicated with love and respect to my parents, Asimina and Nicolaos for their enthusiasm and commitment to my hopes and dreams; to my brother, Emmanuel, for helping me to envision the impossible; and to my wonderful wife, Pamela, for her companionship and delight in our journey together.
Acknowledgements

This work is the common accomplishment and result of the many friends and colleagues that helped me to produce it, but more importantly helped me grow the strength and spirit to make a meaningful contribution. Stephen Fawcett and Vincent Francisco, my co-advisors and guides during my doctoral work, created countless opportunities, the time and abundant resources so that I could identify and explore what mattered to me as a community scientist. My colleagues at the Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development at the University of Kansas welcomed me into their family and patiently nurtured my understanding and competence as a researcher committed to learning with our community partners.

Special thanks also go to Kari Harris, Kim Richter, Adrienne-Paine Andrews, Jannette-Berkley-Patton, Renée Boothroyd, Paul Evensen, Derek Hyra, Heather Witney, and Catie Heaven who made learning at the Work Group fun and adventurous. I am tremendously grateful to my community colleagues of the YouthFriends Initiative whose rich wisdom and passion for making a difference in the lives of youth fundamentally altered my view and path for community research and service. In particular, I thank Pam Polson, Laura Vernon, Karen Grover, and Lisa Adkins for demanding the best out of me as an evaluator and helping to shape my skills and understanding of youth and community development. Two longtime mentors always provided formal and informal support for me throughout this period. Mel Hovell introduced me to the world of research and applied behavior analysis, and life has never made more sense since then. Dan Bassill engaged my mind and heart in the pursuit of community action on behalf of all children.

Let this work be an expression of the investments others have made in me.
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Introduction

"At one level, mentoring speaks to the American traditions of individual achievement, progress and optimism. It is connected to an improved workforce and economic competitiveness... At the same time, mentoring has another, more subtle allure. This aspect speaks to yearning for community lost, to a time of greater civility and responsibility for strangers."

- Mark Freedman (1993)

Mentoring - one type of caring relationship between an adult and a younger person - has increasingly been a priority among promising practices for youth development services and programs. The current call for widespread mentoring has evolved through the use of mentoring in planned activities of youth service organizations and research on the effects of adults volunteering as mentors in planned activities with youth. Planned mentoring is term used to distinguish the activity of adults volunteering to be with a youth as a mentor from the activity of adults throughout a child’s life that serve as mentors, such as parents, neighbors, relatives, teachers, and friends (Benard, 1992). Although mentoring programs date back to the early 1900s, interest in mentoring as a form of intervention for youth support and development has intensified in the past fifteen years (Rhodes, 2001). Rhodes reports that approximately half of mentoring programs at the time were established during the past five years, and only 18% had been operating for more than fifteen years. An estimated five million American youth are involved in school- and community-based volunteer mentoring programs, ranging from the Big Brothers/Big Sisters to other, less structured programs.

Freedman (1993) summarized and critiqued the literature on the state of the mentoring movement in the United States. Through that landmark book, he brought attention to the diverse and synergistic benefits of mentoring on youth, adult mentors and the broader community. He emphasized the lack of community infrastructure to support widespread volunteerism by adults as mentors as one barrier to more communities being able to produce these benefits.
An extensive literature describes the positive and diverse contributions of mentoring programs that engage adult volunteers with youth (exemplary reviews include Blocher, 1993 and Sipe, 1996). Published findings suggest that mentoring is good for children in school, as demonstrated by increased school attendance and improved academic performance, such as reading ability (e.g., McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995), and in life, as demonstrated by the development of social and job skills (e.g., Payne, Cathcart, & Pecora, 1995; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). Empirical evidence also suggests that mentoring may also be good for the adults who mentor and for the parents of youth that have a mentor by improving their ability to communicate with youth (e.g., Benard, 1992; Tierney, Gorssman & Resch, 1995). Mentoring can benefit businesses by raising employee morale and productivity at work (e.g., Meyer, 1999). For the broader community, increasing the prevalence of adults who care for non-kin youth may contribute to increases in community trust and community’s social capital (Freedman, 1991; Ianni, 1990; Putnam, 2000). Adults who volunteer in school-based mentoring programs may develop a better understanding of school challenges and support for school issues in elections (e.g., Gallagher, 1998). Although programmatic concerns (e.g., problems when mentors reject youth, or youth reject mentors; e.g., Diem, 1992) and conceptual issues (e.g., debates about the importance of mentoring style; e.g., Schaffer & Liddell, 1984) deserve further research, the empirical evidence to date supports the use of planned mentoring activities with volunteer adults to support and assist youth in their social, academic and career development.

Next to research on how mentoring works, descriptive and correlational studies have identified components and guidelines for how to implement successful mentoring programs (e.g., Bernad, 1992; Roaf, Tierney, & Hunte, 1994). These include screening the criminal background of volunteers, interviewing screened volunteers for their interests and to help match them in appropriate relationships with youth, and training adult volunteers on how to build a caring relationship with youth through mentoring activities. In an analysis of elements of successful community initiatives, Schorr (1994) articulated a gap in research and critical public analysis of the conditions under which what is known to work may actually work. Although research has indicated the effects of mentoring and core components of effective mentoring programs, it has not described and analyzed the infrastructure (e.g., people, organizations, resources) to start, improve, sustain, and expand.
mentoring programs, and widespread volunteerism through such programs. At this time, data and commentary on such an analysis are largely absent.

In 1995, the Harvard Mentoring Partnership began an ongoing media campaign to promote widespread adult volunteerism for youth (Harvard School of Public Health press release, 1998). The Children First campaign is directed by the originator of the “designated driver” campaign to encourage adults that drank too much alcohol to give their car keys to someone else to drive them home. It includes most of the national support organizations for mentoring (e.g., Big Brothers/Sisters, The National Mentoring Partnership and other partners of America’s Promise) and many of the major television broadcasters in the United States (e.g., ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, HBO). The phrase “children first” serves as the campaign’s slogan for a variety of volunteer roles that help youth. This phrase is publicized through public service announcements and use in advertising, entertainment programming and news. A toll-free number accompanies all media to help adults find volunteer opportunities with youth specific to their geographic area. Hundreds of millions of dollars per year are anticipated through private and public grants, gifts and donations of media resources to help place “children first.”

Aside from publicity and media to promote mentoring, substantial amounts of funding are being raised on behalf of mentoring. Federal funding for projects such as the Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) granted millions of dollars to individual programs and community partnerships that provide mentoring opportunities (Juvenile Mentoring Program, n.d.). Philanthropic foundations such as the David and Lucile Packard Foundation have similarly supported mentoring programs (David and Lucile Packard Foundation, n.d.). One substantially generous effort in California, the Governor’s Mentoring Partnership, has led efforts to raise and contribute over $76 million since 1995 to start and support mentoring throughout the state (Governor’s Mentoring Partnership, n.d.).

An example was found of one grassroots organization working to create the conditions that facilitate and expand effective mentoring programs and volunteerism in and support of mentoring. Serving Chicago tutoring, mentoring and school-to-work programs since 1993 (Tutor/Mentor Connection, n.d.). The Tutor/Mentor Connection was recognized by the National Mentoring Partnership as a promising model for creating environmental change to support widespread mentoring. With fewer than eight paid members, the organization mobilizes hundreds of individuals and organizations to collaboratively produce
supportive events. These include producing an annually updated directory of programs in the Chicago area (to help volunteers find programs, and for programs to find and support their peers, as through referrals to their programs), semi-annual training conferences for program leaders and volunteers as well as for businesses and stakeholders that want to learn how to support programs, an annual Fall volunteer recruitment campaign, and a mini-grants program run through the Chicago Bar Foundation to identify and reward best practices for implementing programs.

The Tutor/Mentor Connection also uses maps to focus attention and channel resources to programs most in need. The maps show the geographic distribution of programs in Chicago, along with critical events and social conditions to highlight areas that would benefit from mentors. For example, when a child was killed in a drive by shooting, a map indicated the location of the shooting and the distribution of mentoring program around the location of the critical event. A short caption under the map describes how people could volunteer as mentors or help start mentoring programs in that area in order to prevent such problems in the future. Maps are shared with business and civic leaders and with the news and press media to facilitate support in volunteers and money for programs in areas of greatest need. However, research on the Tutor/Mentor Connection has not shown how its facilitation of environmental change is associated with increases in the number of mentoring programs, or widespread mentoring in Chicago (MSN Communities, n.d.).

January 2002 marked the first annual, national celebration of Mentoring Month in the United States (White House WWW, 2002). Proclaimed by the President Bush, this new holiday comes nearly five years after the 1997 Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future (America’s Promise, n.d.), when former presidents and leaders from business and other sectors launched America’s Promise, a national initiative to make youth a national priority through increasing adult mentoring. These and other high profile, heavily publicized events have been designed to increase awareness and support for mentoring. But, little evidence exists that the infrastructure, such as resources and support for these efforts, are in place to increase and maintain widespread mentoring in every community (Freedman, 1993). Even less evidence exists for how that infrastructure can be created.

This study provides one of the first empirical examinations of what community conditions that support mentoring might look like, and how school-community partnerships
might facilitate the creation of environmental changes (new programs, practices and polices) to promote widespread mentoring. The primary questions of this study are:

1. Did the school-community partnerships facilitate environmental change to promote adult volunteer mentoring in their community?
2. What factors are associated with discontinuities in the rate of environmental change?
3. How are environmental changes contributing to the goal of volunteer mentoring through their distribution across community sectors and strategies for behavioral change?
4. How is the pattern of environmental change associated with that of new mentors over time?

Archival records of the initiative and notes from monthly and periodic semi-structured conversations with initiative staff were used to identify environmental changes and those events and activities that may be associated with discontinuities (marked increases or decreases) in the rates of change.

**Background and Context of the YouthFriends Initiative**

In 1994, leaders from the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, the Partnership for Children (a metropolitan area youth advocacy organization), six school districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area, and the YMCA of Kansas City came together to plan how to produce widespread volunteer mentoring by adults in caring relationships with non-kin youth. With support from the National Mentoring Partnership and One to One, they formed a collaborative initiative called YouthFriends. The concept and purpose for YouthFriends were influenced by a number of focus groups conducted by the youth advocacy organization, following growing grassroots support that something more than traditional programs for youth was needed in the community. The focus groups found that young people wanted several things from adults, including respect, to be listened to, and to have adults in their lives who care about them. Those founding leaders identified one principal goal for YouthFriends: “Connect 10,000 caring adults with 30,000 young people primarily in one-to-one and small group relationships, by January 1, 1999.”
The Design and Model of YouthFriends

The YouthFriends partners intended to realize the benefits of mentoring for youth and the community at large by creating the conditions necessary to make widespread mentoring by adults easier and more rewarding. Characterized as a "new approach to mentoring " (Grantmaker Forum, 1999), the Initiative was designed to be flexible and adaptable, to make mentoring an attractive volunteer opportunity for most adults and to meet the needs of young people in a variety of settings, from urban to suburban to rural. This model included several standards for how the Initiative would be organized and function to permit this flexibility and adaptability:

- Volunteer opportunities did not emphasize “mentors” or “mentoring” because focus group research suggested adults might interpret them as requiring greater responsibility and skill than they had. The terms “youth friend” and “caring relationships with youth” were used instead.

- The volunteer opportunities would be school-based and the unit of implementation for the Initiative would be the school district to provide an infrastructure (e.g., space for activities and adults with experience in working with youth) and access to youth, and because adults and youth may feel more comfortable participating in a familiar setting such as the school.

- The Initiative would define and follow the highest standards for ensuring safe and productive interactions between adults and youth. All adults would be screened for their criminal background, interviewed for their interests and skill related to mentoring, and trained on how to build a trusting working relationship with youth before being matched with youth.

- The Initiative would serve all youth, and not just provide services for youth with academic and social problems.

- Schools would be allowed to develop activities most appropriate for their context. A standard menu of volunteer opportunities would serve as a guide. The minimum requirement for adult volunteers would be an hour a week for four weeks. One-to-one (i.e., one student with one mentor) matching would be highly encouraged, but not mandated.
• The Initiative would be non-competitive with other volunteer and mentoring programs in schools and the broader community. Staff would collaborate with other programs toward the mutual goal of connecting adults with youth, and, if necessary assist other programs with screening and training.

• The Initiative would serve as a catalyst for changing the environment to promote and sustain adults in forming caring relationship with youth by networking and collaborating with individuals and organizations from all sectors of the community.

• The Initiative would track its results and hold itself accountable for helping to increase the number of adults that volunteer as mentors, as well as for community change and improvement in the lives of youth.

The university-based evaluation and technical assistance team that conducted this study was hired 14 months after the Initiative was launched; the team was based approximately one hour away from the central office of the Initiative. To clarify the model of change, the evaluation team assisted the YouthFriends leadership in defining the intervention components and elements. Six components describe the work of the Initiative. These components were used to specify further what the Initiative does as an intervention. Also, they helped to clarify areas of administration for the Initiative, and to highlight what components to replicate as new school districts joined the Initiative over time.

Table 1. Components of the YouthFriends Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Specific Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Team and Volunteer Development | a. Training for paid and volunteer staff at all levels of the Initiative (e.g., Partnership directors, school building coordinators of volunteers, classroom teachers that solicit mentors)  
| | b. Standardized training for new mentors and ongoing training for existing mentors on how to be effective mentors |
| 2. Marketing and Recruitment | a. Working with professional advertising companies to create a brand name for the Initiative and a logo  
| | b. Annual metropolitan-area recruitment campaigns and local community events to encourage new volunteer mentors |
Table 1. Components of the YouthFriends Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Specific Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Program Development | a. Screening of prior criminal convictions of adults that apply to be a volunteer mentor  
b. Matching new volunteer mentors and students  
c. Creating new and enhancing existing mentoring opportunities |
| 4. Initiative and Community Development | a. Expanding to new school districts and enhancing support within existing Partnerships  
b. Standardizing protocols for management of the Initiative  
c. Starting new collaborations with sources of volunteer mentors and volunteer support, such as businesses and other nonprofit organizations, to build an infrastructure for mentoring with youth |
| 5. Evaluation | a. Establish data collection and management protocols for all levels of the initiative (e.g., volunteer recruitment, environmental change, youth outcomes)  
b. Provide periodic (e.g., monthly) feedback on progress and supportive dialogue about improvement |
| 6. Institutionalization | a. Fundraising  
b. Assisting school districts and communities to organize sustained funding for the initiative  
c. Incorporating the Initiative screening and volunteer matching procedures as standards for all volunteer programs in a school district |

The Initiative Structure

YouthFriends was organized and implemented on three levels: the Initiative Central Office, local school-community Partnerships, and individual schools. The staff of the Central Office was made up of a director, a co-director, and about a half dozen staff skilled
in marketing, fundraising, community relations, and volunteer and staff training. The Central Office organized and managed activities and procedures that were common to all Partnerships that implemented the Initiative model. Its duties included managing the volunteer background screening process, providing training materials, creating and providing marketing materials and events, facilitating relationships and activities with external technical assistance (such as for evaluation and strategic planning), coordinating and facilitating meetings among all the Partnerships, and generating funds and donated support for the Initiative. The Central Office did not directly supply money to any Partnership. Instead, funding was raised on behalf of all the Partnership in the Initiative and used to provide the common operating activities free of charge to each Partnership that joined the Initiative. The only exception to this funding process was that the six founding Partnerships of YouthFriends were funded for staff salaries up through the second year of work. Partnerships were not discouraged from doing fundraising for themselves.

The second level of organization was the school-community Partnership. As mentioned, the unit of implementation for the Initiative was the school district. In order to be part of the Initiative, a school district was required to commit office space, operating supplies (e.g., phone, postage), and at least one full time paid staff to manage the Initiative components. The six founding Partnerships had one full time paid director and one half time assistant. The name of the Initiative in a school district was the combination of YouthFriends and the school district name. A YouthFriends Partnership served as the representative of the Initiative in its school district, and as a liaison between the school district, the Central Office, and its community. Each Partnership was responsible for all aspects of promoting, developing, and implementing the Initiative in its community as defined by the school district service boundaries. These duties included encouraging schools to accept the Initiative and to start volunteer activities. It included finding, training, and supporting school staff to implement volunteer activities. Those included recruiting, interviewing, training, matching, tracking, and developing volunteers; and building a network of business and civic support for the Initiative in their community.

The third level of operation was the schools. After a school principal agreed to have Initiative activities in his or her school, a counselor or teacher at the school was recruited to volunteer as the school’s coordinator for the YouthFriends Partnership. This school coordinator was responsible for helping the Partnership director develop and implement
volunteer activities, orienting new volunteers to the school and activities, tracking volunteer activity (e.g., sign-in procedures, and passes to permit volunteers on school grounds), and increasing support for the Initiative among teachers and volunteer organizations in their school, such as through the Parents and Teachers Association or grant-funded programs.

Methods

The methods used in this study were guided by the broader evaluation of the overall Initiative. That evaluation examined several levels of Initiative results, including volunteer and youth satisfaction and improvement related to the Initiative, environmental change facilitated by the Initiative, and community-level indicators related to youth social and academic development. The procedures and results of the broader evaluation that apply to this study are described here.

Settings and Participants

At the time of this study, YouthFriends was conducted in the Kansas City metropolitan area. This area included 11 counties in Missouri and Kansas. In 1999, the population of this 11-county area was approximately 1.7 million people with roughly 329,000 (19%) of them between the ages of 5 and 17, and 1.3 million aged 18 or older (Metro Dataline, 1999). The county-level median household income ranged from $31,773 to $63,187. The county-level percent of families in poverty ranged from 2.5% to 13.9%.

Of the six school-community Partnerships that founded the Initiative, three were included in this study because each implemented the Initiative model and complied with the evaluation procedures throughout the study period. Two of the other three original Partnerships were not fully sponsored by their school district; the third had three different Partnership directors during the study period, which undermined the implementation of the Initiative model and evaluation procedures. Each of these Partnerships represented the unit of intervention, measurement, and analysis for this study. The three Partnerships were Center YouthFriends, Independence YouthFriends and North Kansas City YouthFriends, here described as Partnerships A, B and C, respectively.

The school district service boundaries defined the geographic service area of each Partnership. The three school districts were near each other (e.g., approximately a 30 to 50 minute drive from one to the other). The school districts of Partnership B and C were the only school districts in their respective geographically defined municipalities -- the Cities of
Independence and North Kansas City, Missouri, respectively. The school district of Partnership A shared the Central Kansas City area with other school districts. More and larger industries and national-level employers were based in the city of Partnership C than in that of Partnership B. Partnership A had access to several large employers located within and around its school district’s boundaries.

The variables in Table 2 characterize the school district of each Partnership. The school districts varied in total population, as well as total number of schools and student enrollment. The school districts of Partnership A and B were located in Jackson County, which had a lower median household income than Clay County where Partnership C was located. In general, the schools provided classes starting in August or September and ended in late May or early June, with little to no classroom activity during June and July.

Table 2. Descriptive Characteristics of Each Partnership’s School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>26,915</td>
<td>68,949</td>
<td>112,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 5-17</td>
<td>3,768 (14%)</td>
<td>12,243 (18%)</td>
<td>19,543 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18 and over</td>
<td>21,462 (78%)</td>
<td>52,411 (76%)</td>
<td>85,554 (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% female</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% white</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Median Household Income 1999</td>
<td>$38,500</td>
<td>$38,500</td>
<td>$45,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Schools (Number of Enrolled Students)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>4 (1,392)</td>
<td>14 (5,111)</td>
<td>20 (7,870)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>1 (429)</td>
<td>3 (2,701)</td>
<td>5 (3,771)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>1 (828)</td>
<td>3 (3,367)</td>
<td>4 (5,127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Students Enrolled</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>11,179</td>
<td>16,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>170 (77%)</td>
<td>642 (75%)</td>
<td>1,091 (83%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Descriptive Characteristics of Each Partnership’s School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partnership 1</th>
<th>Partnership 2</th>
<th>Partnership 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drop-outs grades 9-12</td>
<td>56 (7%)</td>
<td>304 (9%)</td>
<td>289 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Fee Lunch</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Superintendent in District</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Classroom Teacher Ratio</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Teacher Salary</td>
<td>$42,335</td>
<td>$41,940</td>
<td>$39,161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Evaluation Framework

The evaluation team was invited to serve the YouthFriends Initiative in two ways: to help develop and implement evaluation of processes and results, and to help apply lessons learned to enhance the Initiative’s work. A participatory evaluation approach was used throughout the evaluation activities (e.g., Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1994); leaders and staff of the Initiative contributed to measurement decisions, implementation and sense making about the results.

The evaluation of the Initiative adopted a theoretical framework or logic model (see Figure 1) that describes five iterative stages of work common to such community improvement efforts (Fawcett et al., 2000). Planning and context analysis usually occurs in the early stages of an Initiative, and periodically thereafter, as goals, strategies and actions are chosen and adapted based on community problems, needs and resources. As planned actions are implemented, they may stimulate environmental change: organizational or community-wide practices (e.g., schools dedicate rooms or space for mentors to meet with students), programs (e.g., a police department works with a school to start a new reading program) and policies (e.g., a bank adopts a policy to extended lunch time for employees who mentor during their lunch). These environmental changes can affect the development and display of new behaviors among individuals (e.g., being a reading tutor). If the environmental changes are of sufficient amount and intensity, they can affect widespread
behavior change throughout a community (e.g., prevalence of adults who spend at least an hour a week in a caring relationship with a child). This, along with other environmental

Figure 1. A School-Community Framework for Promoting Adult-Youth Caring Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem and goal assessment</th>
<th>Engaging collaborators toward common goals</th>
<th>Strategic planning</th>
<th>Environmental Change</th>
<th>Individual Behavior Change</th>
<th>Population-Level &amp; More Distant Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meetings to promote organizational change to support mentoring</td>
<td>Fundraising and generation of resources to do the work</td>
<td>Media/Raising awareness of issues and services</td>
<td>New and modified organizational, institutional and community-wide practices, programs and policies to make mentoring easier and more rewarding</td>
<td>Change in youths’ and adults’ engagement in mentoring/caring relationships</td>
<td>School district or city-level change in graduation and attendance rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Youth behavior change related to socially important goals (e.g., academic performance, absence of drug use)</td>
<td>Community-level change in prevalence of youth goals/problems behaviors (e.g., crime, illicit substance use)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

supports (and related behavioral changes) could affect health and development outcomes of the population (e.g., the prevalence of high school graduates, the prevalence of teens that do not use illicit drugs). This study focuses on understanding the relationship between
environmental change and the adult behavior change of volunteering to become a mentor for a child.

**Study Aims and Questions**

Each aspect of this framework, such as where environmental changes are associated with individual behaviors for mentoring, offer opportunities for measurement and hypothesis testing to enhance understanding and improvement of Initiative’s work. The current study aimed to enhance understanding about several questions related to the Initiative’s framework:

1. Did the school-community Partnerships facilitate environmental change to promote adult volunteer mentoring in their community?
2. What factors are associated with discontinuities in the rate of environmental change?
3. How are environmental changes contributing to the goal of volunteer mentoring through their distribution across community sectors and strategies for behavioral change?
4. How is the pattern of environmental change associated with that of new mentors over time?

**Measurement System**

**Environmental Change**

The intermediate outcome between a Partnership implementing the components of the Initiative (the intervention) and subsequent increases in new mentors (the primary dependent variable) was environmental change. The definition and measurement procedures of environmental change were adapted from prior studies to assess the product of the behavior of community health partnerships (Fawcett et al., 1993). An environmental change was operationally defined as:

a. a new or modified program, policy or practice of governmental bodies, agencies, businesses, and other sectors of the community, that

b. has occurred (is not just planned), and

c. includes community members external to the partnership or outside the committee or subcommittee advocating for change, and
d. is related to the partnership’s chosen goals and objectives, and

e. is facilitated by individuals who are members of the initiative or are acting on behalf of the initiative.

The start of environmental change was measured through a documentation system in which Partnership directors typed in descriptions of events and actions that were important to the Initiative. Directors were not required to report when the change ended or might end, and researchers also did not track the offset of each environmental change. The components and instructions of this documentation system were developed through research since the early 1990s by researchers associated with the broader evaluation encompassing the current study (Fawcett et al., 1993, 1995; Francisco, Paine, & Fawcett, 1993). This system used data collection forms to prompt for specific information that would facilitate accurate coding of each item for the various measures. A sample view of one of these forms is illustrated in Appendix A. Prompts on the form asked a reporter to describe:

- the date the item occurred
- what happened
- why it was important to the Initiative
- what people and organizations were involved in making the event or action take place
- whether the action or event was new or different in some important way
- any specific outcome or result that may have occurred
- the community sector (e.g., business, schools) in which the event took place
- the strategy of behavior change (e.g., providing information, removing barriers) inherent in the event or action

The director of each Partnership was selected to be the reporter of events for their Partnership because that person was most knowledgeable about its activities and outcomes. All directors received training on the overall evaluation framework, and the meaning and definition of environmental change and its attributes (e.g., sector and strategy). This training included group presentations, followed by individual sessions to train the discrimination of items (examples and non-examples) that could be an environmental change by its operational definition, and followed by coaching and feedback on items reported during monthly telephone conversations with evaluation staff. Directors were reminded to report items at the end of each month.
One evaluation staff member was designated as the primary support staff for each Partnership, and also served as the primary coder of items for that Partnership. During this study period, the author was the evaluation staff member and primary coder for Partnerships B and C, and helped to train the evaluation support person for Partnership A. A Partnership’s evaluation staff member reviewed all reported items to assess and correct item codes based on the operational definition of environmental change. Each month, this staff member spoke with the Partnership director by phone to provide feedback on the environmental changes reported during the month, to review and clarify items whose description was not clear, and to facilitate a supportive dialogue about the work of the Partnership and its improvement. Once every four months, the evaluation staff person met with the Partnership director in person to present and discuss evaluation findings to date. This discussion always included a review of environmental changes reported using a graph of the Partnership’s cumulative monthly amounts of environmental change (e.g., Figure 2). The director and the evaluation support person discussed the significance of noticeable trends and discontinuities in the graph, and potential events that may have contributed to discontinuities in the rate of environmental change and the overall work of the Partnership.

Retrospective documentation (of items reported between January 1995 and March 1996) was conducted by having Partnership directors organize archival materials (e.g., meeting reports, newspaper and publicity materials) and then retrieve and report items of importance. The evaluation staff helped the directors in this retrospective documentation by suggesting what archival materials to review and using the retrospective documentation period as a way to train directors how to discriminate instances of environmental change.

From August 1996 forward, data collection forms were filled on the Internet pages using the University of Kansas Work Group Online Documentation System. This made it easier and faster to report, organize and review environmental changes (compared to using paper forms that were mailed to the evaluation team). The prompts for what information to collect were the same for the paper and the online documentation systems, except that the online system included drop-down menu items to select one community sector and one behavioral change strategy.

All data for environmental change were stored in a Microsoft Access 1997 database in computers located at the facilities of the evaluation team. The evaluation team manually entered reported items collected during the retrospective documentation period. Items
reported through the Internet were automatically stored in the database (synchronous data entry).

**Coding of Distribution of Environmental Change**

For an item scored as an environmental change, the Partnership’s evaluation support person (also serving as the primary coder for that Partnership’s reported items) coded that item for two characteristics of environmental change hypothesized to be important within the framework guiding the evaluation: the community sector where the change occurred and the strategy for behavior change represented. Partnership directors also coded the sector and strategy of items they believed were environmental changes, but the director’s coding began with the Internet reporting forms in August 1996 and was optional. The sector where the change occurred (e.g., schools, business) was assessed in order to estimate the penetration or exposure to the change for the target individuals (e.g., government employees, classroom teachers). The strategy for behavior change represented in the environmental change (e.g., providing information, removing barriers) was assessed to estimate the intensity of behavioral strategies used to create an environment that promotes volunteer mentoring with youth.

The selection and definition of sectors occurred through conversations between the evaluation team and the Initiative leadership and were based on areas of work and services commonly found in communities (Table 3). When an environmental change may have occurred in multiple sectors, the coder was instructed to select the primary sector or one most relevant to environmental change based on the reporter’s description of the change. For example, if an item reported, “The partnership worked with a local advertising company (business sector) to start a new program where employees volunteer to teach high school students (school sector) how to market themselves to potential colleges and employers,” the primary sector would be coded “business and industry.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>Places and organizations that employ others and manufacture goods or provide services for a profit within or outside the partnership’s community (e.g., banks, utility companies, retail stores).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen/Grassroots</td>
<td>Groups organized and run by people in the neighborhoods within the partnership’s community (e.g., neighborhood associations, groups of residents organizing a neighborhood beautification event).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Organizations</td>
<td>Voluntary groups of people within the partnership’s community organized to engage others for the benefit of the community (e.g., bowling clubs, chambers of commerce, library or reading clubs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>Places and organizations of formal, post-high school education (e.g., community colleges, vocational training programs, and public or private universities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organizations</td>
<td>Not-for-profit organizations serving social and humanitarian needs within and outside the partnership’s community (e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary Club).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith/Religious</td>
<td>Places and organizations offering spiritual services and settings for prayer and meditation (e.g., churches, synagogues).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Organizations of elected and paid staff with the responsibility of developing policies and regulations (e.g., city council, mayor’s office).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Human Services</td>
<td>Organizations funded to provide medical and social welfare services (e.g., hospitals, welfare assistance offices).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>Organizations funded to enforce laws and protect the community (e.g., police, fire department).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Community Sectors Where Environmental Change Occurred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media/Entertainment</td>
<td>Public and private organizations whose primary purpose is to provide fictional and non-fictional information to educate, inform or entertain the community (e.g., television and radio news and broadcasting organizations, movie and drama theaters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropy</td>
<td>Organizations whose primary purpose is to raise and distribute money and donations to benefit the public welfare (e.g., community foundations and trusts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Public and private organizations that educate youth up to the attainment of a high school degree or its equivalent (e.g., elementary schools, alternative schools or GED programs).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each environmental change was also coded for one of nine strategies intended to change individual or organizational behavior (Table 4). The types and definitions of strategies were adapted from the evaluation team’s prior research and experience with collaborative partnerships (Fawcett et al., 1993; Paine-Andrews et al., 1999). The various strategies intended to describe classes of organizational behavior commonly exhibited by community partnerships and organizations that support and influence partnerships.

Table 4. Strategies of Behavioral Change Represented in Environmental Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing Information</td>
<td>Changes that present information as through media or in-person presentations to increase knowledge and awareness about the Initiative’s mission (e.g., Neighborhood Association began publicizing mentoring opportunities in their monthly newsletter).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Skills</td>
<td>Changes intended to develop or improve skills related to the Initiative’s mission (e.g., Bryan Telecommunications began holding on-site volunteer training for employees that chose to mentor through the Partnership).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Strategies of Behavioral Change Represented in Environmental Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Support from Influential Others</td>
<td>Changes to acquire or increase assistance or collaboration from others for the Initiative’s mission (e.g., Began a new collaboration with Parents as Teachers to design a program for high school students who want to learn parenting skills).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing Barriers</td>
<td>Changes that take away or minimize obstacles or situations preventing people and organizations from contributing to the Initiative’s mission (e.g., 21st Century Child Care program allows non-paying students to stay after school one day a week to meet with mentors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Feedback on Goal Progress</td>
<td>Changes that specifically provide information on how well something is happening related to the Initiative’s mission, goals or objectives (e.g., Worked with the Initiative’s business partners to begin summarizing and disseminating data on number of employees mentoring through the Initiative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Opportunities to Respond</td>
<td>Changes that establish new or enhance existing means for others to contribute to the Initiative’s mission (e.g., Created new program at elementary school to teach table manners to first grade students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the Physical Design of the Environment</td>
<td>Changes that specifically alter the physical setting to promote the Initiative’s mission (e.g., Began opening unused classrooms on the second floor of the school to give mentors and students a quiet place to read).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Services</td>
<td>Changes to existing services to promote the Initiative’s mission (e.g., Began a one-day field trip to Gateway 2000 as an add-on to the Sprint Internet program).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying Policies</td>
<td>Changes that adapt existing or create new written organizational rules or procedures that when enforced would promote the Initiative’s mission (e.g., School district began allowing secondary school teachers to leave their building in order to be mentors to students outside their school).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When more than one strategy seemed inherent in one environmental change, the coder was instructed to select the primary strategy or one most prominent and relevant in the reporter’s description of the change. For example, an item reported, “The partnership facilitated a change in a business’s policy to allow for on-site recruitment of volunteers for the Initiative.” The strategies inherent in this description are modifying policy, facilitating support from influential others (such as company leaders to endorse the policy), and providing information (as would occur during volunteer recruitment events). The primary strategy coded would be “modifying and developing policy” because policy change was explicitly mentioned, facilitating support occurred prior to the reported environmental change, and actual recruitment events had not yet occurred.

New Volunteer Mentors

The ultimate Initiative goal guiding each Partnership was to increase the number of adults that volunteer to be a mentor with one or more school-age children (grades one to twelve). Parents were not allowed to be a mentor for their children, but were allowed to mentor children in their child’s school. For this study, adults who volunteer to become a mentor were called volunteer mentors. The dependent variable was new volunteer mentors in a Partnership of the Initiative. This variable is called new mentors to imply that this was the first time that person was a volunteer in the Partnership, and should not be assumed that the person had never mentored a child prior to this time. A person was counted as a new mentor if he or she passed the Initiative’s screening, completed the Initiative’s training, and was matched with a specific Initiative activity in a Partnership, such as to mentor, tutor or otherwise be engaged with one or more youth in Initiative-sponsored programs and activities.

The number of new volunteer mentors was measured through procedures that the Initiative staff developed and used to collect and manage volunteer data before the evaluation team began work with the Initiative. The evaluation team requested copies of measurement tools and a description of measurement methods to ensure that new volunteers were measured in a similar manner across Partnerships. Each Partnership used paper sign-in sheets posted at each program site to collect information about their volunteers. Volunteers were required to sign-in prior to participating in a mentoring activity and program coordinators monitored and ensured proper sign-in. Partnership staff collected these sign-in
sheets at the end of each month and entered the information into their database. Each Partnership used an identical Microsoft Access 1997 database to store and manage information about their volunteers. A private company had developed this database system for the Initiative, and installed an identical version of it on a personal computer at the director’s office of each Partnership. The director and the director’s assistant managed the data in this database. The evaluation team reviewed the data structure of the database and the procedures that partnership staff used to count and track new volunteers to ensure that each volunteer had a unique identifier and that person was not counted more than once as a new volunteer for a given Partnership. Within the first two weeks of each month, Partnership staff ran summary queries to identify the total number of new volunteers and reported that aggregate number to the evaluation team.

**Data Analysis and Reliability**

All data were stored in one table of a Microsoft Access database. Analyses were conducted separately for each Partnership. The codes of the primary coder were used for all analyses. A separate crosstab query was run to total environmental changes by month, by community sector code, and by code for behavior change strategy. Reports of new volunteers were originally entered by monthly total by each Partnership’s director.

The monthly calculations were used to create graphs of the cumulative monthly rates of environmental change and new volunteers. These graphs include vertical dotted lines to separate two working school periods (see Figure 3). These two six-month periods approximated the working school year: January to June (called “Spring” in this study), and July through December (called “Fall” in this study). The distinction of six-month periods was used to indicate the timing of a known confounding effect on results of time-related analysis due to the winter and summer holiday periods when schools were closed or provided few services. These periods were times when Partnership staff and volunteers took holiday from work, and were periods of generally reduced activity.

The statistical significance of the correlation between monthly rates of environmental change and new mentors was examined using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for two related continuous variables (SPSS Inc., 1998). This nonparametric procedure tests the hypothesis that the two variables have the same distribution. It makes no assumptions about the shapes of the distributions of the two variables. This test takes into
account information about the magnitude of differences within pairs and gives more weight to pairs that show large differences than to pairs that show small differences. The test statistic is based on the ranks of the absolute values of the differences between the two variables. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test considers information about both the sign of the differences and the magnitude of the differences between pairs.

Other factors that may be associated with discontinuities in rates of environmental change, such as hiring staff and strategic planning, were suggested by earlier studies of environmental change facilitated by community partnership (Fawcett et al, 1997; Paine-Andrews et al, 1999). Broader contributing factors that may have set the context for environmental changes related to mentoring, or may have influenced mentoring rates independently of Partnership-facilitated changes, such as the start of Americas Promise nationally and locally, were drawn from media and Partnership print materials. Print materials were examined throughout the evaluation period to help understand factors that may have contributed to the processes and results of the Initiative. These materials included notes from Initiative meetings (held approximately once each month), separate evaluation team meetings, and the meetings between the Partnership director and their evaluation support person, publicity and media materials related to individual Partnerships and the broader Initiative, and review of a main newspaper for the metropolitan area, the Kansas City Star.

Evaluation staff were trained and tested on their ability to discriminate environmental change by using a standardized, pre-coded list of items representative of events and actions reported by community partnerships that used the documentation system in prior studies. Staff were allowed to code Partnership items after their coding results exceeded 90% agreement with the standardized list of items.

Following the monthly review, clarification and correction of codes for reported items conducted between the director and primary coder of each Partnership, a second evaluation staff member independently coded the reported items while blind to the original code. The percent agreement for items marked as environmental change between the original and second evaluation observer was 81%, 89% and 90% for items reported by Partnerships A, B and C, respectively.
Study Design

Because this was a field study of an intervention designed and controlled by the Central Office and Partnerships of the Initiative, the study researchers did not control the timing or precise implementation of intervention components. A multiple case-study design was used with monthly measures over four years: retrospectively between January 1995 through March 1996, and prospectively from April 1996 through December 1998. The unit of intervention, measurement and analysis was the individual Partnership. To examine the association between environmental changes facilitated by a Partnership and new mentors in that Partnership, environmental change was considered the independent variable and new volunteer mentors as the dependent variable. For analyses of environmental change and new mentors over time, the multiple case study design used repeated measures but without switching replications (because each Partnership’s baseline was short and nearly identical across sites). Replication of findings across each Partnership case study was examined for each study question.

Results

The results are presented for each of the four primary study questions.

1. Did the school-community partnerships facilitate environmental change to promote mentoring in their community?

Each Partnership facilitated environmental changes to promote mentoring in their community. The total environmental changes facilitated during the four years was 119, 80 and 190 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively. Examples of specific environmental changes are given in Table 5. These examples were selected by the author to illustrate the diversity of changes facilitated by the Partnerships as well as the variety of community sectors and strategies for behavioral change inherent in environmental changes. The average number of environmental changes per month was 3, 2 and 4 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively. The average number of environmental changes per six-month school period was 15, 10 and 24 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively.

The total number of new adult volunteer mentors during the four years was 512, 882 and 910 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively. The average number of new mentors
per month was 11, 18 and 19 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively. The average number of new mentors per six-month period was 64, 110 and 114 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively.

Table 5. Illustrative Environmental Changes Facilitated by the School-Community Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership A (119 environmental changes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College allowed a student in their work-study program to earn up to ten hours per week credit for community service provided to the Partnership through the Initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborated with a Technology Group to start the “Surfing the Internet” program where mentors help students learn how to use the Internet safely; began with 20 students at one of the elementary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Began the Teen Mom Mentor Project, where community volunteers are paired as mentors with teen mothers through the Partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Elementary School created a more private space (compared to the cafeteria) for Lunch Buddies mentors to visit and eat with their students (placed a table into the second floor hall).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborated with community leaders to bring a nationally recognized youth anti-violence program to the School District. The program began with mentors at the Middle School.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership B (80 environmental changes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army begins Operation Read in collaboration with the Partnership to recruit reading tutors for district elementary schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Area Library System endorses the Partnership and allows its employees work time-off to volunteer as mentors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership mentors began volunteering in a new after school program funded by another School District Program at the high school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With assistance from the high school staff, the Teen Moms mentoring program was moved to the high school campus. Previously the program met in the daycare center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborated with the School District program for students with behavioral problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Illustrative Environmental Changes Facilitated by the School-Community Partnerships and the Police Academy to do special four week Partnership project with mentors.

**Partnership C (190 environmental changes)**

- Partnership began Computer Lab Companion program at Rickter Elementary School.
- Crater Bank employees from the Layola branch began mentoring as Group Lunch Buddies at Franklin Elementary School.
- CEO of Bird House Industries okays employee flex-time for mentoring through the Partnership as long as employees get approved by their supervisor.
- South Bay Middle School formally agrees to begin mentoring through the Partnership.
- Public Relations of the School District began distributing copies of our volunteer recruitment flyer into mailings of the School District.

2. **What factors are associated with discontinuities in the rate of environmental change?**

Figures 2, 3 and 4 display graphs of the cumulative monthly levels of environmental changes facilitated by each Partnership. Changes are graphed cumulatively, with the onset of each new change added to all previously documented changes. Cumulative records, rather than by frequency, more easily identify patterns and trends over time. Also, the cumulative graphs suggest the additive and non-independent nature of environmental changes. One environmental change may stimulate the creation of new changes in the near future, and months or years later.

Discontinuities in the pattern of change within a specified period offer a point of examination of factors that may be associated with an increasing or decreasing trend during that period. Research with similar community partnerships during the past decade has identified several factors that may affect a partnership’s facilitation of environmental changes (Fawcett et al, 1997; Paine-Andrews et al, 1999). These include strategic/action planning, hiring staff, changes in leadership of a partnership, monitoring/documentation feedback on a partnership’s facilitation of change, and making outcomes matter (e.g., rates of change and new mentors matter). The effects of a set of these factors are examined here (shown in the boxes for each Figure), by looking for their potential association with points of discontinuity in the pattern of environmental change.
The participatory evaluation methods preclude a staggered introduction of such factors in order to test for differences across Partnerships with and without the factor during the same time period. This study’s design cannot rule out the effect of unknown factors that may be associated with periods of discontinuity in environmental change. Rather, the present analysis attempts to assess the reliability of each factor’s effect by examining discontinuities during the presence of each factor at the same time across Partnerships.

Some of the more obvious discontinuities appear to be associated with: a) the start of the first school year (August 1995), b) and the beginning of the Initiative’s strategic planning, and c) making outcomes matter through the deadline holding school districts accountable for the salaries of their Partnership’s staff (June to August 1997). It is difficult to rule out the seasonal effect on discontinuities, and the potential interaction among factors, because every factor identified with discontinuities occurs within one to two months following the start of a new six-month school period.
Figure 2. Partnership A: Factors Potentially Associated with Discontinuities in the Amount of Environmental Changes Facilitated Over Time

- Start of Partnership
- Start of 1st full school year of volunteer recruitment
- Began Initiative-wide action planning for change
- Began 1st annual metro-wide celebration of YouthFriends month
- Began monthly reporting of changes from plan
- Began monthly feedback & support from evaluation team
- Deadline for school district to begin paying for salary of Partnership staff
- Start of 1st school year for new leadership for Initiative by a Central Office
- Began 1st annual metro-wide celebration of YouthFriends week

Cumulative Number of Environmental Changes

Month/Year

JFMAMJJASONDJFMAMJJASONDJFMAMJJASONDJFMAMJJASONDJFMAMJJASOND
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120
Figure 3. Partnership B: Factors Potentially Associated with Discontinuities in the Amount of Environmental Changes Facilitated Over Time

- Start of Partnership
- Start of 1st full school year of volunteer recruitment
- 1st annual metro-wide celebration of YouthFriends month
- Deadline for school district to begin paying for salary of Partnership staff
- Began Initiative-wide action planning for change
- Began monthly reporting of changes from plan
- Start of 1st school year for new leadership for Initiative by a Central Office
- Began monthly feedback & support from evaluation team
- Began monthly feedback & support from evaluation team
Figure 4. Partnership C: Factors Potentially Associated with Discontinuities in the Amount of Environmental Changes Facilitated Over Time.
3. How are environmental changes contributing to the goal of volunteer mentoring through their distribution across community sectors and strategies for behavioral change?

Tables 6 and 7 show the total number of environmental changes coded for each community sector and behavior change strategy, respectively. For each type of sector and strategy, the total amount of changes of that type is shown as a percentage of all changes facilitated by the Partnership. The percentages for each table show that most changes cluster predominantly in the business and school sectors. With respect to behavior change strategies, most Partnership environmental changes used facilitating support from influential others and creating opportunities for others to be engaged in mentoring. The analysis of distribution across strategies shows greater variability across Partnerships than the sector analysis. Compared to Partnerships A and C, Partnership B showed a higher percent of its total changes removed barriers to mentoring (20% versus 5% and 6%, respectively) and modified policies to support mentoring (19% versus 5% and 7%, respectively).

Table 6.
Distribution of Partnership-Facilitated Environmental Changes Across Community Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Partn. A (N = 119)</th>
<th>% of Total A</th>
<th>Partn. B (N = 80)</th>
<th>% of Total B</th>
<th>Partn. C (N = 190)</th>
<th>% of Total C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Industry</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen &amp; Grassroots Work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic &amp; Community Organizations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges &amp; Universities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.
Distribution of Partnership-Facilitated Environmental Changes Across Community Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Partn. A (N = 119)</th>
<th>% of Total A</th>
<th>Partn. B (N = 80)</th>
<th>% of Total B</th>
<th>Partn. C (N = 190)</th>
<th>% of Total C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith &amp; Religious Organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government &amp; Justice System</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Services &amp; Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media &amp; Entertainment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools &amp; School Districts</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.
Distribution of Partnership-Facilitated Environmental Changes Across Strategies of Behavior Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Partn. A (N = 119)</th>
<th>% of Total A</th>
<th>Partn. B (N = 80)</th>
<th>% of Total B</th>
<th>Partn. C (N = 190)</th>
<th>% of Total C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing Information</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.
Distribution of Partnership-Facilitated Environmental Changes Across Strategies of Behavior Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Partnership A</th>
<th>Partnership B</th>
<th>Partnership C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Removing Barriers</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>16 (20%)</td>
<td>36 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Support from Influential Others</td>
<td>40 (34%)</td>
<td>23 (29%)</td>
<td>40 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing Physical Environment</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Services</td>
<td>8 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying Policies</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>15 (19%)</td>
<td>14 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Feedback on Progress</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Opportunities to Respond</td>
<td>46 (39%)</td>
<td>14 (18%)</td>
<td>71 (37%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How is the pattern of environmental change associated with that of new mentors over time?

Figure 5 shows that the monthly amount of environmental change and the amount of new mentors follow a similar pattern over time. The pattern suggests a positive association, with the trend of each variable increasing (and decreasing) in the same way. The association between monthly rates of environmental change and new volunteers was statistically significant for each Partnership’s outcomes ($Z = -4.9$, -5.25 and –4.25 for Partnership A, B and C, respectively with all $p < 0.001$). The related pattern between environmental change and new volunteers appears within most six-month periods in each Partnership, and overall for each Partnership. It is not as evident in the first six-month
period of each Partnership. Also, it does not appear in the seventh and eighth six-month period (Spring and Fall 1998) for Partnership B, when the monthly rate of new mentors is increasing while the rate of environmental change is zero or low.

Overall, the cumulative trend of both environmental change and new mentors shows a step-like pattern across the six-month periods. The trend for each variable increases at the start of most six-month periods and decreases towards the end of each six-month period. This increasing trend appears greater at the start of each Fall six-month period (i.e., July and August) than at the start of each Spring six-month period (i.e., January and February). This step-like pattern across six-month periods is evident for each Partnership.

Aside from this seasonal pattern, there appear several areas of more extreme discontinuity in and increased slope for specific time periods. First, across every Partnership, the second and the sixth six-month period show a more distinct change in the slope and a higher slope for both variables’ trend lines relative to the slope of other six-month periods. In Partnership C, this higher slope continues for the trend in environmental change through the eighth six-month period (for almost 18 months). In Partnership B, there is a sudden steeper rise in the slope in the trend of new mentors from July to September 1998.
Figure 5. Cumulative Number of Environmental Change and New Volunteer Mentors for Each Partnership

**Partnership A Totals**
119 Environmental Changes
512 New Volunteer Mentors

**Partnership B Totals**
80 Environmental Changes
882 New Volunteer Mentors

**Partnership C Totals**
190 Environmental Changes
910 New Volunteer Mentors
Discussion

School-community partnerships can facilitate environmental changes to promote new volunteer mentors for school-age youth. The three Partnerships studied as part of the broader YouthFriends Initiative facilitated the creation of new (or modification of existing) programs, practices and policies to promote mentoring. These environmental changes were distributed across several community sectors and strategies of behavior change. The cumulative monthly amount of environmental changes and new mentors appear positively associated and stable throughout the four years of the study.

Some General Limitations and Considerations Regarding the Interpretation of Results

Several methodological issues must be considered when interpreting the study results. These include measurement concerns and threats to internal validity (possible cause and effect relationships) and external validity (generality of the findings). Those issues related to the study in general are discussed now; issues relevant to specific study analyses are discussed in the sections that follow.

First, the measurement of environmental changes (and new mentors) should not be assumed to represent the total or even the majority of activities, time and resources spent by Partnership staff to implement and sustain their projects. The selection of environmental change as the independent variable in this study was based on the evaluation framework and its inherent assumptions of what may be an important predictor of community-wide behavioral change. However, Partnership staff clearly engaged in (and documented in their logs) planning and administrative meetings, interviews with prospective volunteers, and many other activities necessary to fully implement the Initiative components. These process activities, although not reported, were presumed to contribute to the product of environmental change.

Second, another design challenge was the lack of experimental control over the content and timing of the intervention or the broader Initiative. Initiative staff designed and controlled all program interventions and actions related to producing environmental changes and new volunteers. The study researchers did not experimentally control and test the effect of individual environmental changes, or intervention components, and thus claims regarding causality and degree of attribution between one or more changes and new mentors were not possible. Furthermore, the study began approximately 14 months after the design
and implementation of the Initiative. The in-depth examination of Initiative materials and activities during those months of retrospective documentation may have contributed to greater (or lesser) reporting of environmental changes before March 1996.

Third, the participatory evaluation methods inherent in this study both challenge and strengthen the validity of its findings. The documentation of environmental changes and new volunteers by Initiative staff made this study possible. The evaluation team occasionally reviewed printed publicity of events indicative of environmental changes. However, the evaluation team did not directly observe the self-reported descriptions of environmental changes (although changes such as new programs were public and potentially verifiable) and new volunteer mentors. The Partnership directors relied on the participation of school staff and volunteers to produce accurate sign-in sheets used to verify that volunteers matched in a program actually participated in that program (a prerequisite for being counted as a new mentor). There may have been situations where a volunteer was counted as a new mentor because he or she was successfully screened, trained and matched with a student, but then did not follow-through with his or her commitment. The self-report by each Partnership director of actions and events that often involved them might result in more reports of environmental changes that they observed (e.g., start of new mentoring programs) and less reports of environmental changes they did not observe (e.g., business policies to make it easier for employees to volunteer as mentors). Seeing the wide distribution of environmental changes across community sectors, it may be safe to assume that people from organizations in each sector facilitated changes with each Partnership but that those changes were not always visible or known to the Partnership directors, and were not documented. Thus, the total environmental changes may be an underestimate of actual changes. On the other hand, the documentation process is a reactive measurement method during which the evaluation staff provided periodic feedback to directors on their Partnership’s rate of change over time. As directors learned to better discriminate environmental change over time, they may have placed great value on reporting changes, compared to other types of activities, and subsequently facilitated and reported more environmental changes over time, than if directors had not received feedback from the evaluation team.

The repeated measures in this study approximate a time series design that enables the investigation of the pattern of change over time (as used for study questions one and
four). The time series design is commonly used to measure learning or development of behavior over time, such as a partnership’s learning or development of the ability to facilitate environmental change. A repeated time series design can have a formative function for community interventions, with the data prompting community members to find ways to affect ongoing processes and outcomes, such as the rate of volunteer mentoring with youth in their community.

Fourth, the potential correlations across environmental changes and across mentors may bias the statistical analyses to test the significance of the association between monthly rates of environmental change and new mentors. For example, some reports of environmental change suggest that one change (as with a corporate policy or support from an influential group) can create a cascade of new changes within a few months, or years later. Adaptation and copying of environmental changes among the Partnerships was encouraged during monthly Initiative meetings, and the geographic proximity of the Partnerships made it easier for them to collaborate on producing environmental changes together although reports of such joint changes were rarely found in the documentation logs. Also, Partnership directors cautioned that mentors, as a variable, might not be independent over time or across Partnerships because one mentor can be instrumental in recruiting her peers at work or his family members and friends.

Fifth, the online documentation system, or capacity for Internet-based data input, used to document environmental change may have affected the overall findings. The system was useable through any computer capable of browsing the Internet. This might have made it easier to report items by reducing time and software barriers, and enabled faster review and feedback from evaluation staff. However, this method and its results might not generalize well to programs with no or rare Internet access. Also, occasional connection difficulties and disconnections with the Internet sometimes frustrated Partnership directors with the documentation process and may have caused them to stop, forget or change their reports of some events.

Sixth, despite these threats to internal validity inherent in the documentation system and the participatory evaluation process, it is considered improbable that staff outside of each Partnership could identify Partnership-facilitated environmental changes as accurately as the director of each Partnership. Even if additional funding was available to conduct regular interviews with stakeholders of the Partnership and to regularly review all media
and archival records related to a Partnership, external research staff might miss or misreport events known only by Partnership directors. Because the primary purpose of tracking environmental change is to detect how Partnerships facilitate changes important to their mission, Partnership directors may be the most appropriate and accurate reporters of such items. The fact that Partnership directors helped to develop, learned to use, and consistently tracked their contributions throughout three years of the study, without direct financial reimbursement or immediate reward, highlights the promise of participatory evaluation methods in field research and documentation methods by community initiatives.

Finally, the case study design -- with only three carefully selected cases -- minimizes the generalizability of the study findings to other school-community partnerships promoting mentoring. This is particularly due to selection biases that may make the Partnerships in this study different than school-community mentoring projects in general. The three study Partnerships were part of a broader Initiative to increase mentoring, and consequently received free and donated marketing, evaluation, volunteer training and screening, and staff and program development that may not be available to partnerships and programs outside of the Initiative. Mentoring activities usually occurred on the school campus, mostly during the school hours, and may differ from community-based mentoring programs that usually offer activities during non-school hours. Further, the results seen for these three Partnerships may not generalize to less supportive contexts. For example, the other three of the founding six Partnerships of the Initiative were not included in the study because their staff were less compliant with the documentation procedures, and their school districts did not fully agree to administer the Partnerships at the time of the study (one of the requirements of the Initiative). The Partnerships participating in this study might benefit from an infrastructure not available to other school-community partnerships to promote mentoring.

Interpretations of Findings

School-Community Partnerships as Facilitators of Environmental Changes to Promote Mentoring

The existence of programs, practices and policies brought about with the help of each Partnership, and the existence of new mentors in each Partnership show that each
Partnership contributed to changing their community’s conditions to so that mentors work with youth. The total mentors represent 2.3%, 1.7%, and 1.1% of the population aged 18 years and over for Partnership A, B and C, respectively. These results are high relative to the Initiative’s goal for the entire metropolitan area to match 10,000 mentors, or about 0.8% of the population over 18 years old. The total number of mentors for each Partnership does not include high school students that served as mentor and tutors through the Partnership. By 1998, all Partnerships had begun ways to recruit, train and match high school students from their district; however an Initiative-wide decision was made to not include them in the formal count of adult volunteer mentors.

The amount of new mentors across the Partnerships is an approximation of the number of school-age youth that received the time and support of a caring adult. If total student school enrollment (Table 2) is used to estimate the percentage of students served by the total mentors of each partnership, then 19.3%, 7.5% and 5.4% were served through Partnership A, B and C, respectively. Although these percentages underestimate the actual students served (because one mentor may serve more than one child during one period, and several children over the years), they are within the range of the Initiative’s goal to match 30,000 youth with a mentor, or 9% of the 5-17 year-olds in the metropolitan area.

Judgments regarding the quantitative importance of total environmental changes facilitated by each Partnership are speculative. Aside from the methodological concerns about over- and under-reported environmental changes, there are conceptual concerns when comparing the value of different environmental changes. For instance, one new program may create opportunities for tens to hundreds of new relationships between students and mentors. Similarly, a new school district policy to require one-to-one mentoring opportunities to be facilitated by the Partnership in every school may increase the number new programs and subsequent opportunities to engage mentors. One point of reference to understand the amount of changes facilitated by the Partnerships is the amount reported by other studies of school-community partnerships that similarly defined and measured environmental change For example, a study of a three school-community partnerships to reduce the pregnancies among adolescents reported 104 to 139 environmental changes per Partnership in 4 years (Paine-Andrews et al, 1999). A study of two school-community partnerships to reduce youth and community risks for cardiovascular disease reported 72 and 179 environmental changes per partnership in 3 years (Harris et al., 1997). Compared to
other school-community partnerships (although not explicitly in the mentoring field), the
total amount of environmental changes facilitated by each Partnership (from 80 to 190 in 4 years) is similar and sometimes greater.

More empirical evidence is needed to understand and quantify the social or functional importance of different environmental changes. Such knowledge will be necessary before comparisons of total amounts of environmental change in this study and across studies can provide meaningful interpretations. The analyses of the distribution of environmental changes across community sectors and across strategies of behavior change offer a step toward understanding the contribution of different features of environmental change.

Factors Associated with Partnership Rates of Environmental Change and New Mentors

Discontinuities in Rates Over Time. Several factors previously shown to be associated with discontinuities in patterns of environmental change, such a change in leadership and strategic planning, do co-occur with discontinuities in this study. For instance, Initiative-wide strategic planning occurred at the start or during an increasing trend in environmental change for all three Partnerships (around August 1997). However, the proximity of every examined factor to the start of a new six-month school period raises concerns about the degree of their influence on environmental change.

The official start of the Initiative in January 1995 does not appear to influence rates of environmental change and new mentors until the start of each Partnership, and related commitment of local resources, on or before March 1995. The affect of the formal event in May 1995 when leaders from the community foundation (one partner that helped to start and support the Initiative) introduced the Initiative to leaders of the business community may have been delayed until the Fall of 1995. However, that Fall also represents the first new school year for each Partnership, and the first opportunity to place existing and new volunteers so they can be counted as a mentor; as seen by the sudden increase in the rate of new mentors that begins in August or September across each Partnership.

A similar delayed effect may have occurred with the change in leadership of the Initiative in Spring 1996. Up until that point, a youth service agency that was a founding partner of the Initiative and responsible for volunteer screening had served as a facilitator and informal leader of monthly meetings for the Initiative. In Spring 1996, a director and
staff were hired to start and lead the central office of the Initiative, and to be responsible for the administration of common marketing, recruitment, screening, evaluation, and expansion of the Initiative. However, the actual influence of this leadership change may not have begun until directors returned from summer vacation and the Initiative began its new school calendar year in Fall 1996. The effect of this leadership change does coincide with an increasing rate of environmental changes and new volunteers in Fall 1996, however it is difficult to separate this effect from the start of the new school year.

A sudden change in the rates of new volunteers appears in Spring 1997, coinciding with the first annual celebration of an entire month in honor of the Initiative (February of each year). The mass media and publicity involved in this celebration and major recruitment drive for new mentors may have influenced the rates of new volunteers more so than rates of environmental change. The first annual YouthFriends Week in Fall 1998 (that included the professionally produced mass media campaign by a local advertising firm) appears to have a similar affect on rates of new mentors starting in September 1998.

The Initiative’s strategic planning began in the summer months of 1997 and continued through the fall. Staff from the entire Initiative jointly brainstormed and planned short and long term actions to produce new environmental changes and increase new volunteers. This planning period likely contributed to rates of change and new mentors throughout the year. However, an event with potentially negative impact also occurred from Spring through Fall 1997. Each of the six founding Partnerships was required to have its staff salaries paid by the school district by the start the new school year in Fall 1997. This requirement did not likely influence Partnership B and C because of their strong superintendent support by that period. However, the director of Partnership A (whose superintendent was new and learning the value of the Partnership) reported that this was a worrisome period that threatened to end the Partnership.

National and Regional Events Related to Volunteering and Mentoring. Several national and regional events occurring during the study period may have affected volunteer-seeking organizations in general, as well as YouthFriends’ contribution to environmental change and new mentors. These factors may have helped, hindered or had a mixed effect on an organization ability to get and support volunteers for its work. For example, an organization like the United Way, that support both youth and non-youth related programs, may experience a surge of new volunteers for YouthFriends following the launch of the
America’s Promise initiative in the city, and a decrease of new volunteers for programs to help the elderly or people in drug rehabilitation centers.

Two regional ongoing events were started by the Partnership for Children (n.d.), one of the founding advocacy organizations of YouthFriends. The Report Card, which was a report of statistics, and representative grade (A to F) for health and development outcomes of children in the metropolitan area was an annual Fall event that began in 1992. The “#1 Question Campaign” was a professionally-run, metropolitan-wide media and grassroots campaign to raise awareness and stimulate action of people and organizations for how to better serve children in the area (by asking “Is it good for the children?” before making major decisions) was an ongoing campaign that began in April 1997. These two events, along with several research efforts in 1993 on the needs of children in the area, were part of an ongoing effort of community leaders to make the Kansas City metropolitan area “the child opportunity capital, where the quality of [its] children’s future is the measure of [its] success” (Grantmaker Forum, 1999).

Two other factors with potential community-wide influence were the national (began April 1997) and regional (began April 1998) start of America’s Promise, a national, highly publicized initiative led by former USA presidents and high-profile leaders. America’s Promise is intended to “mobilize people from every sector of American life to build the character and competence of our nation's youth by fulfilling five promises for young people, with the first promise being to increase the number of youth with “ongoing relationships with caring adults in their lives - parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches” (America’s Promise, n.d.). Although no sudden discontinuities in the rates of change and new mentors during the study period appear near the start of any of these national and regional events, it is difficult to assume that their ongoing existence did not affect the study results.

**Distribution (Contribution) of Environmental Change Through Multiple Community Sectors**

The analysis of the distribution of environmental changes across community sectors is meant to show a Partnership’s concentration of change across their community, and to provide one estimate of exposure to (and saturation of) change in a Partnership’s community. Community sectors -- such as business, government and the faith community -- describe where people spend their time. If more new or modified programs, practices and policies to promote and support mentoring are made across more types of places where
people spend their time, then it may be more probably that more people will begin and continue to be mentors. At this point in the research on environmental change, it is not clear if one type of distribution across sectors is better than another. However, an ecological view would suggest that diversifying across sectors is better than concentrating in one or a few sectors.

All Partnerships facilitated environmental changes across multiple sectors. The analysis of the distribution of changes across sectors was based on only the primary sector where the change occurred. Because it was possible for one environmental change to reflect change in multiple sectors, the results in Table 6 underestimate the percentage of change in each sector. This bias may disproportionately affect the results for the business and school sectors because the creation of new programs as a result of school-business partnerships usually involved a change in both sectors. The effect of this bias was minimized if a director reported separate environmental changes that occurred in each sector (e.g., Bass Bank changed its policy to allow employees extended lunch time so they can volunteer; and, a school began new Lunch Buddies program with Bass Bank employees), but one cannot assume this separate reporting occurred.

The similarities and differences in each Partnership’s distribution of changes may help explain how different sectors in a community facilitated or could facilitate mentoring. The Partnerships facilitated nearly an identical percentage of their total environmental changes in the sectors of schools/school districts (56-57%) and colleges and universities (3%). The same kind of environmental changes in colleges and universities were reported across Partnerships: for example, new professor practices to include mentoring in service learning class requirements and new university policies to provide classroom credit for mentoring activities used as part of a practicum requirement. The smaller percentage of changes represented in colleges may reflect that the college age group (generally 18 to 25 years-old) is generally not the target source of volunteers for mentoring programs (e.g., national average and Initiative average age of mentors is mid 30s). It is not surprising that greater than half of all environmental changes were facilitated in the schools because all mentoring for the Initiative took place at schools or through schools (such field trips outside the school).

A pattern seen in the reported environmental changes is a cascading or facilitating effect across levels of the same sector. For example, in the school sector, environmental
changes fell into sub-sectors or levels of the school sector: school district, school and classroom. When one school district adopted a new district-wide policy to offer one-to-one mentoring programs in all of its schools, a school in that district began four different mentoring activities or programs, and then a teacher in that school began to include the Partnership’s volunteers as academic mentors and reading tutors for his class. A similar, but less noticeable pattern was seen in the business sector. For example, when a major banking employer passed a flex-time policy for volunteering to be adopted by all of its branches; then, an individual branch began an on-site recruitment campaign to increase the number of employees that took advantage of the new policy. The identification of different levels of organization or work within each sector may help Partnerships facilitate a greater amount of synergistic environmental changes within a sector.

Next to schools, the business sector accounted for the greatest amount of environmental changes for each partnership. The different distributions of each Partnership’s environmental change for the business sector, as well as for government and faith communities, may be associated to some unique setting and director characteristics among the Partnerships’ leaders. Partnership B did have greater access to a police training academy that was based in the same building, and this likely led to greater environmental changes in the government/justice system sector. In a similar manner, the higher percentage of change in the religious/faith sectors in Partnership C was likely related to the director of Partnership C being an ordained minister and having extensive relationships with churches and religious organizations.

The variation in the percentage of business changes may be the result of the amount and type of businesses available in each Partnership’s community. Partnership C was located in a defined municipality that was home to some of the largest, national employers in the farming, banking and manufacturing industries. Partnership A was located closer to the center of the metropolitan area of the Initiative, and was surrounded by several kinds of businesses (e.g., banks, technology groups) with which to collaboratively create environmental changes. Both Partnership A and C reported new collaborations with several different employers, new programs resulting from those collaborations, and, over time, changes in policies and business practices that allowed employees extended lunches or paid time-off to volunteer as mentors in the Partnership. The community of Partnership B
contained more family-run businesses with fewer employees, which may have been less appropriate sources of school-time volunteers for the Partnership.

Also, because Partnership A’s school district shared its city boundaries with other school districts, larger businesses with multiple sites across the city did not commit all of its sites to automatically work with the Partnership’s school district, as happened in Partnership B and C. Therefore, the director of Partnership A established separate working relationships with each site of larger employers, resulting in several new environmental changes for a given employer, where as Partnership B and C reported one environmental change, such as a policy permitting an entire corporation to offer all employees mentoring opportunities for the Partnership’s school district. This situation may artificially reduce the number of environmental changes reported for the business sector by Partnerships B and C, because their directors’ monthly reports indicated that even if a corporate-level collaboration began with a business, the Partnership director still has to work with managers at each site of the corporation to solicit their support and encourage employees to volunteer.

After the business sector, a greater percentage of changes were facilitated within community and civic organizations. This finding suggests the important role that these volunteer-dependent organizations, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the United Way, had in promoting mentoring through the Partnerships. The environmental changes reported by every Partnership showed that community organizations served as sources of mentors, marketing, and staff for joint mentoring projects. Community organizations benefited from the Initiative’s volunteer screening and credibility to bring mentors and volunteers into their activities, even when those volunteers did not serve as mentors for the Partnership. The number of changes in this sector may demonstrate the influence of a guiding principle of the Initiative; Partnerships were to collaborate, rather than compete, with existing youth-serving organizations toward the shared mission to engage caring adults with youth.

The low to zero amount of change in the sectors of health and human services, media and philanthropy seem unexpected. It is not clear whether the Partnerships did not attempt to facilitate change in these sectors, the directors did not know of changes they had stimulated, or if people in these sectors were less supportive of mentoring than in other sectors. The few changes in health and human services organizations may reflect that fact that these “helping” organizations may have their own site-based youth mentoring (16, 21),
and may be competing with other agencies for adult volunteers in non-youth volunteer programs such as programs caring for hospital patients.

The few changes in media and philanthropy may be understandable in light of the operational structure and actions of the Initiative’s central office. As explained earlier, the central office of the Initiative was largely responsible for the marketing and funding functions that were shared across the Partnerships. For example, the central office developed relationships with advertising firms to assist with logo and image creation for the Initiative, gained the support of governmental, business and media leaders to adopt February as a metropolitan-area, annual celebration month for Initiative mentors and students, and negotiated new partnerships with local and national philanthropies. Each of these accomplishments necessitated environmental changes that were facilitated and reported by the central office, rather than the individual Partnerships. However, the marketing and resource-generating roles of the Initiative’s central office do not fully explain the lack of Partnerships’ environmental changes in the media and philanthropic sectors. For example, Partnerships might have collaborated with local family foundations and trusts, or with philanthropic branches of businesses to set up mini-grants for new mentoring programs, or resources to remove barriers to mentoring (such as transportation to mentoring sites for those without a car or inability to drive).

The results on distribution of environmental changes across sectors indicate that every Partnership helped to alter conditions throughout their community, and facilitated more change in sectors that were more likely sources of new volunteers and support for volunteers: schools, businesses and community organizations. Religious, human services and government sectors, also likely sources of volunteer mentors, included a smaller percent of all changes in each Partnership. These sectors may represent untapped sources of support for mentoring (as shown by Partnership B and C for the government, and religious sectors, respectively). A better understanding and application of how to facilitate environmental changes in different levels of a sector (such as different management levels in a business, or different administrative levels in schools) may increase the amount of change to promote mentoring throughout a community.
Distribution (Contribution) of Environmental Changes Among Multiple Strategies for Behavioral Change

The analysis of the distribution of environmental changes across strategies for behavioral change further specifies the mechanism through which changes in the environment promoted new mentoring. The nine strategy categories describe areas of intervention used by community initiatives that target community-wide behavioral change (23, 45). Each new or modified program, practice and policy facilitated by a Partnership is grouped into the strategy category that best describes the method of intervention used in that environmental change. Prior research findings indicate that use of a broader array of strategies may be more likely to affect community-wide behavior change than reliance on one strategy. Further, exclusive use of interventions and actions to provide information, such as those used in mass media campaigns, does not reliably change behavior (e.g., Andreasen, 1995).

Each Partnership facilitated environmental changes representative of almost every type of strategy. As with the analysis of the distribution of changes across sectors, the distribution of strategies represents only the primary sector where the change occurred. Accordingly, the results in Table 7 may underestimate the percentage of change for each strategy. This bias may disproportionately affect the percentage of environmental changes coded as “facilitating support from influential others” and “creating opportunities to respond” because the creation of new programs often represented new opportunities for mentors and students to participate in the program and also the support of leaders from the business or community organization. An example of this situation would be “The director of the district’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program began referring their students to the Partnership for mentors” (coded as “facilitating support from influential others”), and “Began a new program at Jones Elementary that connects Spanish-speaking mentors with ESL students (codes as “creating opportunities to respond”). Although it cannot be assumed that directors consistently reported separate, but related, environmental changes to indicate the different strategies used, such reporting would reduce the affect of this bias.

“Creating opportunities to respond” and “facilitating support from influential others” to promote mentoring captured the majority of environmental changes facilitated by Partnerships A and C, and many of those of Partnership B. The validity of this finding is evident because the primary duty of each Partnership was to help schools, organizations in
schools and community partners of schools (such as business, religious and civic groups) to start new mentoring activities and get organizational leaders to endorse and send their staff to volunteer in activities. As discussed in the analysis of sectors, facilitating support from people at higher organizational levels may have a multiplying or cascading effect on the overall level of “facilitating support.” For example, getting the support from an administrator of a corporation may make it easier to get support for mentoring by subordinate managers working at different corporate sites in the Partnership’s community.

One of the most sought after types of support that directors mentioned during monthly evaluation meetings, and documented in their logs, was the support of the superintendent of their school district and of school principals. Every Partnership eventually recruited their superintendent to become a mentor, as well as many principals and other school staff. The directors often remarked during meetings that when school staff volunteered as mentors they became more supportive of the Partnership, and better understood its value for students. Support by the superintendent, as shown by serving as a mentor and encouraging new practices to promote mentoring, was believed to broadly influence the support of other school administrators and community leaders on the school board. Partnership B, whose school district had the same superintendent for 35 years, reported earlier, more, and different types of district-wide policies and practices to support mentoring than the other two Partnerships. Partnership C also indicated strong support from its superintend (17 years in the district) and reported district-wide environmental changes facilitated by the superintendent. But the director of Partnership A noted that changes in the district’s superintendent, as well as turnover of principals at schools, necessitated more time to build relationships with those administrators and to convince them of the value of the Partnership. The relationship between the longevity of the same superintendent in a school district and their degree of support of the Partnership (and subsequent environmental changes) may be coincidental. However, attaining the support of school personnel, and particularly administrators, to support the Partnership’s mission for mentoring appears to be a face-valid and generalizable strategy to expand school-based mentoring.

Two other strategy categories containing a larger percentage of environmental changes, particularly for Partnerships B and C, are “removing barriers” and “modifying policies.” Commonly reported changes to remove barriers to mentoring included providing transportation to schools for people from retirement homes who cannot drive, helping
businesses and community organizations to conduct their own volunteer recruitment campaigns for mentors, and providing incentives, such as entertainment and celebratory events to recognize organizations and people that support mentoring. Commonly reported policy changes included changes to employee work schedules to provide time or flexible hours in order to mentor during business hours, and changes to the rules of school and school-based organizations, such as the PTA, rules to require existing volunteers to go through the Partnership’s screening and training protocols.

Environmental changes coded as “modifying policies” usually included words such as “policy,” “adopted,” “approved,” “decided” or other words and terms suggesting a formal policy decision for an organization. Although the evaluation staff did not request written proof of a policy for environmental changes reported by Partnership directors, the primary evaluator of each Partnership checked with its director if a reported environmental change was a policy that suggested a longer-term organizational change, or a temporary change in an organization’s practice. Because the directors did not always have sufficient information to distinguish whether change was a new policy or a practice, the number of changes in the policy category may be underestimated.

Several other strategy categories may suffer from under-reporting of certain environmental changes by Partnership directors. Because the Initiative’s central office was responsible for activities related to marketing and training (to keep the Initiative image and volunteer training consistent across Partnerships), environmental changes related to “providing information” and “enhancing skills” were usually reported by the central office staff. Potential explanations for the few changes in the categories “changing the physical environment” and “providing progress on feedback” are that directors had little control to implement these strategies, did not observe (hence, did not report) them, or directors did not fully understand the meaning or application of these two strategies.

Overall, the results on distribution of environmental changes across strategy show that every Partnership used multiple strategies as they helped change their community to promote mentoring. Creating opportunities for mentoring and gaining the assistance of influential people in their community to support mentoring were two of the most common strategies of change used across Partnerships.
Associations Between the Pattern of Environmental Change and That of New Volunteer Mentors Over Time

Monthly amounts of environmental change and new volunteer mentors appear to covary throughout the study period. The positive trend in environmental change rates was followed, one to three months later, by a positive trend in new volunteers that is repeated for most of the six-month periods, and repeated across each Partnership. However, the validity of this association, and claims that each Partnership caused an increase in new volunteers is weakened due to the absence of a comparison program or partnership outside of the Initiative, and the absence of baseline rates of new volunteers in each district before each Partnership. Prior to the Initiative, not such data are available.

The separate six-month working periods of the school year (divided by winter and summer vacations) may have made it more burdensome for each Partnership to facilitate change because school programs, Partnership supporters, and activity in general had to be re-started at the start of each six month period. This burden was greater during each Fall because of the longer period of inactivity during the summer vacation. The six-month periods also influenced the rates of new mentors because of the way the school schedule guided when students could be matched with new volunteers. Volunteer recruitment was an ongoing activity, but the Partnerships put greater emphasis on recruitment during the Fall in order to give volunteers enough time to be screened, trained and matched with a student, and in order to give mentors a chance to develop a longer (year-long) relationship with their student (rather than interrupting the relationship with the summer vacation).

The actual reports of environmental changes for each Partnership do suggest individual environmental changes contribute to new volunteers, and that changes occur prior to new volunteers joining the Partnership activities. Examples of changes in the most prevalent sectors (school and business) and strategies (facilitating support and creating opportunities) show that this temporal relationship between environmental changes and new volunteers is self-evident. A mentoring program or activity must exist before any volunteers can work with students in that program, and a volunteer is not counted as a mentor until they begin working with a student. The time between the decision to start a new mentoring activity and the participation of mentors in students in that activity was not measured. But the monthly event logs of each Partnership show three, six and sometimes more months pass between a reported a planning event for a new program and a report that mentors
began working in that program. The one to three month lag between rates of environmental change and rates of new mentors would seem a conservative amount time to get support from the appropriate school staff to begin the program, develop the procedures for it, and to find and match participating students and mentors.

Next to creating new programs, the most prevalent strategy for environmental changes was that which removed barriers or changed policies in business and community organizations to increase the number of their staff or employees who served as volunteers in the Partnership. After a business or community organization makes such a policy change, it may take several days to weeks before staff complete an application to volunteer in the Partnership. After they submit their application to the Partnership, it would take at least six weeks for that person to be personally interviewed by the director, screened (for criminal record and driving violations), schedule and complete a half-day training, and be matched with an appropriate student. Again, the delay between new organizational practices and policies to facilitate mentoring and the actual start of a new mentor is at least one month.

Seeing the variations across each Partnership’s graph in Figure 6 one may raise questions regarding the dose-effect relationship between the amount of environmental change and increases in new mentors. For example, why is the ratio of 1 environmental change to 4 new mentors for Partnerships A and C, and 1 to 11 for Partnership B (nearly three times the yield for Partnerships)? Perhaps the variation in the ratio of changes to new volunteers is an artifact of under-reporting of changes by the director in Partnership B, and over-reporting of changes by the directors of Partnerships B and C. Or did the changes facilitated by Partnership B result, on average, in more new volunteers that the changes in the other Partnerships? Differences among the director’s self-report of changes is possible, although such differences should be somewhat minimized by each director receiving the same training and support from the evaluation team to learn to report changes, and understand the practical importance of how their environmental change might influence greater numbers of new volunteers. Plausible answers to these questions require the measurement of the number of new volunteers that resulted from one or more related environmental changes. Such measures were not conducted in this study, and their design requires further conceptual research on how to identify when the effect on new volunteers of one environmental change starts and ends.
Although greater research is needed to untangle the dose-response relationship between environmental changes and new volunteer mentors, there are several distinct differences in the type of changes reported for Partnership B that warrant speculation about whether the kind of changes it facilitated were more likely to lead to more new mentors. First, if the environmental changes are looked at in total, the percentage of changes that “modified policies” in Partnership B is over two and three times greater than the percentage of policy changes in Partnership A and C, respectively. Prior studies report that the effect of policy changes on community-wide behavior change can influence more people in a given time, and over the years (NJ-nu, 97). The greater percentage of policies to support and maintain mentoring in Partnership B may have influenced more people to begin mentoring over time. If these policies were maintained, then their cumulative influence may have contributed to the widening gap between the rate of change and acceleration rates of new mentors.

Second, unlike Partnerships A and B, Partnership B reported certain school district-wide and community-wide policies and practices. It also and facilitated those policy changes earlier in the life of the Partnership (within the first year) which may have led to a greater cumulative effect in new volunteers over time. For example, a district-wide decision was made to begin one-on-one mentoring in all district elementary and secondary schools in March 1995 (the month Partnership C started). Then in April (1995) a decision was made to add service by school staff to the Partnership (such as coordinator of mentoring activities) to Career Ladders options (a state-funded program where teachers can increase their income through approved additional activities). That policy change provided an incentive for school staff to work with the Partnership. That same month, a policy was adopted to all school district administrative and secretarial staff time-off from work to volunteer in Partnership mentoring activities, and second policy to all secondary school teachers to leave their buildings in order to participate in Partnership mentoring activities. Policy changes with community-wide implications included the city’s Junior Service League adding volunteering in the Partnership’s mentoring activities as an approved service opportunity (and listing the Partnership and its activities in their catalogue), in April 1995, and the City Manager, who also was a member of the Partnership’s Advisory Committee, began formally endorsing the Partnership to his staff and began to allow city employees some flexibility to volunteer as mentors.
Partnerships A and C do not report any such changes during their first year. Instead most of their reported changes indicate new business partnerships and new school and business programs, as are evident in the higher percentage of such changes in the sectors of schools and business, and in the strategies of “creating opportunities to respond” and “facilitating support from influential others.” The types of policy changes that were intended to affect all schools in the district and the community-wide actions by the city and its nonprofit civic organizations exist throughout the study period for Partnership B. Such wide-impacting changes are not likely to occur without a significant level of rapport and relations with influential leaders in the community and the school district superintendent. As discussed earlier, the superintendent of Partnership B’s school district was very supportive of and promoting of the Partnership. Also, because he and the Partnership director were long-standing members of the community (e.g., 35 years in the school district), they most likely had established relationships with community leaders that enabled these changes to occur so quickly in the life of the Partnership. Although these findings do not mean that Partnerships A and B had less support from their school districts and their community, they do indicate that only Partnership B reported certain policy changes with the potential to influence mentoring at a school district and community-level, and reported many of them earlier in the study period than the other two Partnerships.

Another question related to variations in “dose” or the amount of environmental change across partnerships: what might explain the more than two-fold difference between the amount of changes facilitated by Partnership C compared to Partnership B? Aside from potential confounding related to self-report, and the larger total population and school enrollment of Partnership C, there were some types of environmental changes reported only by Partnership C that suggest a greater ability to delegate or distribute responsibility for creating environmental change on behalf of the Partnership among more people. For example, Partnership C was the only one to create a Speaker’s Bureau (February 1997) so that mentors and school district supporters of the Partnership could make formal presentations to promote the Partnership and recruit volunteers. Partnership C was the only one to recruit and train PTA members to serve as liaisons for volunteer management in its schools (February, 1998), and to train seasoned mentors to serve as a support group for new mentors (March, 1997). Such examples of facilitating support from others by developing
and dispersing leadership should lead to more people contributing to changes on their own and may cumulatively contribute to more changes over time.

A final observation on the relationship between the amount of environmental change and the amount of new mentors over time concerns Partnership A. Given the discussion up to this point, Partnership A may appear less noteworthy, not standing out in its distribution of changes across sectors and strategies. Yet, Partnership A turned the largest percent of district’s adult population into mentors (2.3%). And, its estimated percent of the district’s students served by mentors (19.3%) was two and three times greater than Partnership B (7.5%) and C (5.4%), respectively. These findings may be positively biased by its smaller adult and student populations, and by its central location to many larger employers that minimized the travel time to schools for volunteers during their lunch break or before and after work. However, turnover of school administrators challenged its ability to get and keep support for the Partnership activities. Partnership A produced a steady and nearly parallel pattern between environmental changes and new mentors across the months.

The environmental changes facilitated by each Partnership over time appear to contribute to new volunteer mentors over time. Conclusions about the strength and chance-occurrence of this relationship are limited in this study. However, the examination of the type of changes reported and the temporal relationship between environmental changes and new mentors is suggestive. Further research may help clarify the dose-effect relationship between environmental changes and new mentors.

**Summative Conclusions and Recommendations**

Few examples, and little empirical evidence exist on how to create, improve and expand the community conditions that promote widespread volunteer mentoring for youth. Since the launch of America’s Promise in 1997, celebrities, media and public leaders have increasingly praised the importance of connecting caring adults with youth. These efforts to raise awareness have been matched by significant amounts of funding by governmental and private sources to establish and support mentoring programs. Yet our understanding of how to create and sustain the environmental conditions that produce and sustain widespread mentoring in local communities remains limited.

This study contributes to our understanding of how school-community partnerships facilitate environmental changes (new programs, practices and polices) to promote
widespread mentoring. Findings from the YouthFriends Initiative suggest that school-community partnerships can facilitate environmental change to promote widespread mentoring. Changes primarily targeted schools, businesses and other volunteer-seeking youth services organizations. Changes employed a variety of behavioral change strategies including those to create new opportunities to mentor (new programs and activities), remove barriers (as through collaborating with other volunteer-based community organizations to share resources and volunteers), modify policies (such as employee work schedules to promote mentoring during school hours), and facilitate support from influential others (such as the PTA, superintendents, and business leaders). The case study design and lack of experimental control preclude claims about the degree that environmental changes were responsible for new mentors. However, in a multiple time series design, the repeated association of key factors (such as strategic planning and changes in Initiative leadership) with rates of environmental change is suggestive of their function in increasing rates of change. The generalization of findings may be limited to programs that are school-based, and that have benefits of a larger infrastructure (such as the school district or support organizations) that provides marketing, funding, and general operating support.

This study also demonstrates how participatory evaluation can be used to help staff and evaluators of mentoring Initiatives regularly document and see the contributions of environmental change. The Internet-based documentation system in this study provides a promising model to enable diverse and dispersed programs of an Initiative or community to track their cumulative contributions toward their common purpose to promote widespread mentoring. Periodic summary and feedback of documented changes may give partners a chance to reflect on and celebrate progress and, if necessary, to redirect their efforts. As more mentoring programs, Partnerships and their stakeholders document their efforts and results, our understanding and ability to create the infrastructure for widespread mentoring, across more communities, will grow beyond the standard and incomplete solutions to raise awareness and funding.

Several recommendations for research and practice are drawn from this study. First, if the target is greater community wide volunteer mentoring, research must expand beyond questions for what makes a good mentoring relationship and a good mentoring program, to what environmental conditions produce and sustain good mentoring programs. Second, environmental change (new programs, practices and policies) related to the mentoring
mission should be tracked as an intermediate outcome between implementation of programmatic components (e.g., volunteer recruitment, screening, training and matching) and increased and sustained rates of volunteer mentors over time. Third, features of environmental change, such as where the change occurred (e.g., sectors) and the duration of a change (the start and end of a change), deserve further research in order to better understand the potential dose-effect relationship between rates of environmental changes, rates of new volunteer mentors, and more distal population-level outcomes for youth and community development. Social validity assessments of the significance of documented environmental changes, as might be judged by community and Initiative leaders, or experts in the field of mentoring, may help to weight the importance of a given change for the goal of widespread community mentoring (see illustrations of this in Fawcett et al., 1997 and Harris et al., 1997). Fourth, documentation of activities and contributions should be a regular activity of program staff and their stakeholders (e.g., businesses, partnering community organizations) and be used to facilitate periodic co-learning and adjustments about what works and what needs to be done differently to reach a community’s mentoring goals. Finally, supportive organizations (like the Central Office serving YouthFriends Partnerships) can help to reduce operating costs and enhance technical assistance for mentoring programs and partnerships. Further research should clarify and enhance the beneficial role of such supportive organizations. A ultimate success of a supportive infrastructure for mentoring will be measured by how well a community helps all children benefit from caring relationships with adults throughout their life.
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Appendix A. A View of the Internet Data Entry Form Used by the Partnerships

Data Entry Form for Activities and Accomplishments Database

If you need help, click on this link... HELP!

Site/Organization Name: [Input field]
Recorder: (your name) [Input field]
Date: (e.g. 12/31/96) [Input field]
Code (e.g., CC, X): [Input field]
Describe the...